Chapter 401 - 401 Dreamwalker

401 Dreamwalker

From Loki losing control and collapsing without being completely dead, Lumian had been vigilant about being reported by the core members of the April Fool's team and staying prepared for potential surprise attacks from official Beyonders. After all, Loki knew that he was Lumian Lee, a leader of the Savoie Mob, overseeing Salle de Bal Brise. He even knew that Lumian carried the aura of the Blood Emperor Alista Tudor.

This convinced Lumian that the April Fool's team still had their sights set on him. They were reluctant to hand their target over to the authorities or force him out of the market district where they could no longer keep an eye on him.

It had to be known that a marionette sealed with an angel was undoubtedly an item that could cause Loki's strength to undergo a significant transformation. Missing out on Lumian meant he could almost never meet another one.

Furthermore, the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings might have a use for Termiboros.

The core members of the April Fool's team were quite direct about this matter. They didn't bother concealing their mockery and malice. They believed Lumian could see through it and expected him to be provoked, eventually choosing to wait in the market district.

When to make their move was entirely up to them. They wouldn't recklessly attack while Lumian had assistance.

Jenna sensed the anger and hostility lurking beneath Lumian's composed demeanor and calm words. She didn't attempt to persuade him further and simply mumbled, "I hope these villains get what's coming to them."

Lumian's emotions had been on an upheaval, causing the lingering effects of his near-loss of control to resurface.

Taking a deep breath, he raised his right hand and massaged his temples to ease the pounding in his head.

"What's wrong?" Jenna asked, her concern evident.

Lumian replied succinctly, "The mental trauma from the battle with Loki will take a week or two to fully heal."

Jenna's eyes darted as she offered, "Do you want me to give you a head massage? Franca taught me. I'm quite skilled at it.

"Don't be shy. We're friends, after all!"

Her last statement trailed off playfully, an attempt to divert Lumian's attention and alleviate his emotional state with a teasing tone.

Lumian scoffed.

"Why do you keep saying that from time to time? 'Franca mentioned this, Franca taught me that.'"

"Don't you often…" Jenna started but abruptly stopped herself.

Initially, she had intended to say, "Don't you often say, 'My sister said that, my sister taught me that.'"

Lumian fell silent, and Jenna did the same. After a few seconds, seeing that Lumian didn't object, Jenna left the chair armrest and moved behind him. She reached out and began massaging his temples and both sides of his head.

Lumian's body tensed up.

Lumian scoffed. "As a Hunter, I would instinctively throw anyone who dared to touch my head or bestow them with a massive fireball. It took a lot of effort not to roast you."

"Did the Provoker potion completely alter your language and speech patterns?"

Lumian responded bluntly, "Yo, why the fancy words?"

As the two of them bantered, Lumian's body gradually relaxed. After a few minutes, he leaned back on the sofa and half-closed his eyes.

While enjoying Jenna's massage and relieving his headache, he naturally brought up the "pranks" of Loki, I Know Someone, and the other core members of the April Fool's team. Jenna's anger flared, and she subconsciously tightened her grip.

"Take it easy," Lumian said with a hint of physical discomfort.

An Assassin possessed considerable strength.

Jenna eased her grip, still fuming.

"I've never encountered such scoundrels or vile individuals in all my performances. They deserve every bit of suffering!

"Dammit, why am I not a Witch yet?"

Lumian's eyes remained closed as he asked, "How's the digestion with the Instigator potion? Have you grasped the principles of acting?"

Jenna's attention shifted. As she continued to knead, she reflected, "There are currently two key points. First, Instigation is a means, not an end. Second, the essence of Instigation lies in understanding the core of the matter and the conditions of the people involved, not in the use of abilities. Additionally, I've come to a realization. Instigation will inevitably bring about consequences; it just depends on whom you want to face those consequences."

"Not bad," Lumian commended, a rare occurrence.

Standing behind him, Jenna lifted her chin modestly and said, "I find opportunities to practice every day, especially among theater actors and apprentices at places like Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, where conflicts are abundant. Instigating someone forces me to consider who I want to benefit and who will be taught a lesson or suffer losses. It made me realize that instigation is merely a tool."

Lumian's demeanor noticeably softened as he let his thoughts wander. He casually inquired, "Where do you think I might find an opportunity to act as a Pyromaniac?"

Jenna's hands continued their soothing motion as she thought and replied, "Trier is a place of relatively basic order. You can only act on smaller matters; you can't create a major spectacle there…

"But there might be an opportunity during the pursuit of those villains. When you mentioned it earlier, I wanted to set them ablaze!"

Lumian suddenly had an idea, though it wasn't entirely clear.

At that moment, footsteps echoed from the stairs, growing progressively louder.

Jenna released her grip on Lumian's head and approached the door with a smile.

"Franca is back."

…

In the bustling streets of Trier, the night might lack tranquility, but the citizens living in those areas still found their way into slumber.

Suddenly, a golden retriever carrying a small backpack made an appearance in the dream.

The golden retriever sat at the dream's edge, guiding the hazy scenes to reveal hidden memories deep in the dreamer's subconscious.

It was the excitement of pushing through the crowd and rushing towards the death row inmate's corpse with bread in hand. It was the hesitation that came after believing that human blood bread could cure illnesses. It was the mixture of joy and skepticism that had accompanied their first hearing of this rumor…

The golden retriever caught sight of the figure who had initially informed the dreamer about the blood bread rumors. It turned out to be a neighbor who lived next door.

And so, the golden retriever traversed dream after dream, activating the corresponding subconscious memories to search for the source of the blood bread rumors.

After hundreds of dreams, the golden retriever noticed two dreams with clear contradictions.

One belonged to a father who believed that he had obtained the secret of human blood bread from a Warlock he happened to meet, using it to cure his daughter's illness. The other dream belonged to his child, who had suddenly fallen ill and then just as suddenly recovered, as if the human blood bread was a miraculous elixir.

The golden retriever guided the father to manifest the Warlock in his dream.

It was very ordinary and unremarkable.

Scenes in the dream flickered rapidly, and the image of the Warlock began to change, memories flowing back.

When their initial encounter was revealed, the golden retriever saw a Warlock with a completely different face from before!

Then, the face rapidly shifted, eventually settling into the image the dreamer normally associated with the Warlock.

The golden retriever had her own interpretation of this.

The Warlock's Hypnosis could only be fully effective in a face-to-face encounter, allowing the dreamer to retain their first impression of him. Only then would they be affected by the hypnosis and have the image in their memory altered.

There was no need to repeat the process of awakening the subconscious within the dream. The original image of the Warlock naturally surfaced in the golden retriever's mind.

He had short brown hair, parted in a 3-7 split, flaxen-colored eyes, and a thin, freckled face. He wore gold-rimmed glasses on the bridge of his nose…

Exiting the dream, the golden retriever turned her attention to Madam Magician, who had suddenly appeared beside her. In a human voice, she declared, "I've

obtained a result."

Dressed in a blouse and a long brown dress, Madam Magician sighed and eagerly said, "Give me the information, and I'll confirm it."

The golden retriever remained silent, her eyes darkening.

After a few seconds, Madam Magician took a few steps forward, causing starlight to manifest around her.

It resembled a reflection of the vast cosmos on the ground.

The resplendent and condensed stars spun rapidly, providing a revelation.

Once Madam Magician finished interpreting, she pulled open an illusory door hidden in the darkness and disappeared.

In just over ten seconds, she reappeared and said to the golden retriever, "There's no target on the street the astromancy results point to."

"Were we misled?" the golden retriever inquired in a female voice once more.

Madam Magician nodded and smirked. "But this also proves that what you've seen is the actual target."

As she finished speaking, Madam Justice, clad in a white dress with green trimmings, swiftly materialized.

"Where did you go?" Magician asked in puzzlement.

Madam Justice replied in a gentle voice, "To plant a cue in the dreams of those seeking human blood bread. I've informed them that The Fool Pharmaceutical Company will conduct a volunteer consultation in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative this weekend, offering free treatment and medicine."

"When do you plan to hold the volunteer consultation?" Magician asked out of curiosity.

Madam Justice smiled.

"Tomorrow. I'll sponsor it."

…

At 6 a.m., Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 207.

Lumian naturally woke up from his dream and got ready for the day.

Before he could decide on breakfast, he noticed the "doll" messenger appearing and delivering a letter.

Puzzled, Lumian unfolded the letter and saw a portrait.

Beside the portrait was Madam Magician's handwriting: "This should be what I Know Someone looks like. We'll mobilize all the card holders in Trier to search for him, including you."

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Chapter 402 - 402 Good Luck

402 Good Luck

Lumian examined the portrait in his hand and let out a chuckle.

He hadn't anticipated that the Major Arcana card holders would swiftly uncover the source of the rumors and unveil I Know Someone's true identity.

It made sense. Rumors had started circulating two to three months ago, and Lumian hadn't yet arrived in Trier or infiltrated the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. Loki and I Know Someone hadn't met with any genuine threats. They were naturally audacious when it came to pulling pranks. No matter how cautious they were, leaving traces behind was inevitable.

While it might be challenging for other Beyonders to detect these traces, Madam Justice was a high-ranking Beyonder of the Spectator pathway, also known as the Psychiatrist pathway. She possessed a profound understanding of I Know Someone's various abilities and was his match in every aspect.

Even if this Major Arcana card holder herself didn't execute the operation, her partner, Susie, was more than capable of completing the mission. Lumian knew that this lady was at least a Sequence 5 of the Psychiatrist pathway, just one step away from becoming a demigod.

Gazing at the portrait of I Know Someone, with gold-rimmed glasses, a freckled face, and a thin visage, Lumian caressed the paper and muttered to himself, "Wherever you go, you leave your mark… One day, those unable to control their sinister desires will be exposed."

Taking the portrait, he knocked on Room 305 before Anthony Reid, who frequently came and went from Auberge du Coq Doré.

"Keep an eye on this individual for me. He's most likely a doctor or a medical researcher." Lumian presented the portrait to Anthony Reid, who was disguised as a clerk.

Then, he briefly recounted I Know Someone's performance at the gathering and a few of his typical pranks. He asked earnestly, "Where could someone like him be hiding?"

Anthony Reid sighed and replied, "I'm a Psychiatrist, not a Seer.

"You mentioned that he often exhibited extensive medical knowledge at gatherings?"

Receiving Lumian's affirmation, Anthony Reid pondered for a moment and continued,

"In a gathering filled with pranks, the various details displayed by a Beyonder of the Spectator pathway are what he wants you to remember. They don't necessarily reflect his true identity and could even be misleading.

"I suspect that I Know Someone isn't actually a doctor, but he possesses a deep understanding of medicine and has accumulated extensive knowledge."

Not a doctor… Madam Magician's letter had also mentioned not restricting the search to doctors… But this way, millions of people in Trier could be suspects… Lumian felt both relieved and frustrated.

Anthony Reid added, "A person with antisocial tendencies and enough intelligence might have a fondness for flirting with danger. He enjoys playing with others like a clown. Perhaps it won't be long before he pulls another prank, mocking all those who pursue him."

The only condition being that he remains unaware of the many demigods observing this matter… Lumian watched as Anthony Reid hastily departed and then turned toward Rue des Blouses Blanches.

He had initially intended to locate Lugano Toscano, a quasi-doctor, and inquire if he recognized the person in the portrait. However, it was still too early for that. Salle de Gristmill had not yet opened, and he had no information about where Lugano resided.

Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Franca had already risen early, having also received a letter from her Major Arcana card holder, and was discussing the potential course of their investigation with Jenna.

Franca cautioned Lumian, saying, "We can't involve too many information brokers in the search. I Know Someone might notice it beforehand and change his appearance or leave Trier."

Lumian nodded slowly and responded, "It's nearly impossible to locate someone like this in Trier on our own…

"Don't forget we still have Anthony." Franca winked at Lumian, implying that they had all the card holders in Trier on their side.

"Yes, and I'm here to help too," Jenna chimed in.

Lumian tersely acknowledged her words and decided to proceed with his original plan to begin with doctors.

…

In the afternoon, Jenna arrived at Avenue du Marché and patiently waited by the public carriage stop sign.

Today, she had donned a beige dress and a light brown straw hat, which shielded her from the sun and was adorned with a few cloth flowers. Her brownish-yellow hair was neatly tied into a bun at the back, with the rest cascading naturally.

Without any makeup, her face remained fresh, and her blue eyes held a sweeter charm despite the absence of black eyeliner.

Jenna boarded a public carriage and headed towards Quartier 7, Quartier des Thermes.

Situated on the west side of Quartier de l'Observatoire, this district boasted a pleasant environment and was home to many affluent individuals. The now-bankrupt owner of the Goodville Chemical Factory had once lived here, as had the H?tel du Cygne Blanc, where Charlie had worked as an apprentice attendant.

Quartier des Thermes, also known as the Museum District, featured numerous renowned museums. Adjacent to one of the hot springs lay Delta Asylum, Trier's largest and most formal asylum.

Jenna was visiting Showy Diva, the underground singer who had once taken care of her. Showy Diva had been the victim of rape by Margot of the Poison Spur Mob and had subsequently left the market district to reside in an asylum.

After Lumian eliminated Margot, Jenna had intentionally approached Showy Diva to share the good news. Since then, she had been regularly visiting her.

Initially, Jenna had limited funds and was preoccupied with repaying her debts, so she couldn't do much for her friend. However, when Lumian hunted the padre, Jenna earned a substantial sum of 5,000 verl d'or. Coupled with two compensations and various other sources of income, she still had over 7,500 verl d'or left after repaying all her debts, except the one to Franca.

With less pressure from Franca to repay the debt, Jenna could now afford to allocate a portion of her money to send the former Showy Diva to Delta Asylum, where the facilities, environment, doctors, and nurses were clearly superior.

She visited her friend regularly, partly to pay the fees and partly to demonstrate to the doctors and nurses that this patient had family and friends looking out for her. Anyone who dared to mistreat her would have someone to answer to.

Jenna disembarked from the public carriage, adjusted her brown straw hat, and proceeded along a bustling street.

After a few steps, she noticed a seven- or eight-year-old boy standing alone by the roadside.

The boy had a chubby face and was dressed in the attire of a young gentleman. His neatly combed light-yellow hair complemented his appearance.

Seeing the confusion in the boy's eyes, Jenna approached, crouched down, and asked gently,

"Are you lost? Do you need me to take you to the police station or bring a police officer here?"

The boy sported a mercury bow tie on his white shirt. He sighed and replied, "I'm not lost. It's just that a lady who likes to drink asked me for a favor. I didn't know how to help, and it seemed a bit dangerous where she went, so I decided to wait here."

Over there… Jenna followed the boy's outstretched finger and realized he was referring to either Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, the market district, or Quartier du Jardin Botanique.

"Why did you choose to wait here to help?" Jenna couldn't quite fathom the child's reasoning.

The chubby boy let out another sigh and said, "I don't know why. My instincts just told me to do it."

At this point, the boy looked up at Jenna with a pitiful expression.

"Could you buy me some ice-cream? The weather in Trier is unbearably hot!"

"Where's the lady who likes to drink and asked for your help?" Jenna inquired, her curiosity mixed with caution.

The boy scanned the area and replied, "After I said I wanted to wait here, she went off by herself to find a place to drink."

Isn't this too irresponsible? What if the child goes missing? Jenna couldn't help but frown.

The boy eagerly asked again, "You can buy ice-cream from this café. That way, I can have ice-cream and wait inside without worrying about getting lost."

Jenna, now financially stable, hesitated for a moment before agreeing, "What flavor would you like?"

"Vanilla!" the boy quickly exclaimed with enthusiasm.

Jenna then spent 1 verl d'or to purchase a cup of vanilla ice-cream for the boy from a nearby café.

Seated by the window, the boy received the ice-cream with pure delight on his face.

“Thank you. You’ll be lucky!”

Jenna paid little attention to his gratitude. Instead, she observed as the boy joyfully savored the ice-cream and then quickly left. She found patrolling constables and informed them of a missing child in the café ahead.

Once she saw that the two constables had entered the café, Jenna breathed a sigh of relief and continued on her way with determined steps.

Before long, she arrived at the Delta Asylum.

The asylum was situated near a hot spring, and behind a wall, there stood a three-story building with a grayish-blue exterior and an annex. The surroundings were adorned with lush lawns bathed in the golden sunlight, along with various mobility aids. It was an excellent environment.

Jenna successfully met with her friend.

The former Showy Diva, like other female patients, had short hair that reached her ears. Her face appeared ordinary, and her eyes held a serene expression. She seemed no different from an ordinary person.

When Jenna conversed with her, it was easy to forget that she was afflicted by mental illness. However, Jenna knew all too well that provoking her could lead to an immediate and frenzied outburst, endangering both herself and others.

After chatting for nearly half an hour, Jenna left the designated meeting room, ready to depart.

As she walked along the outer corridor, she gazed out of the window absentmindedly.

On a green lawn, around 20 to 30 mental patients strolled leisurely, each lost in their own thoughts. They leaned against trees, soaked in the sun, or gathered in small groups, engaging in quiet conversations.

They appeared just like ordinary people.

Jenna scanned the surroundings casually, preparing to shift her attention elsewhere.

At that moment, she spotted a figure dressed in a blue-and-white striped hospital gown.

The figure stood tall at over 1.75 meters. His short brown hair was parted in a 3-7 fashion. Gold-rimmed glasses mostly concealed his flaxen-colored eyes, and his face appeared notably thin, adorned with freckles. In that moment, he paced back and forth on the green lawn, seemingly lost in deep contemplation, as if pondering some philosophical question.

Jenna’s pupils dilated.

Th-this is I Know Someone!

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Chapter 403 - 403 Drawing From Experience

403 Drawing From Experience

Jenna's instincts screamed at her to turn around, her fear that the psychiatric patient, suspected to be I Know Someone, might catch her staring.

She kept her composure, exiting the grayish-blue building one step at a time, stepping into the sunlight that poured through the window. Jenna donned a light brown straw hat adorned with cloth flowers.

As she finally left Delta Asylum, returning to the same street where she had first encountered the mysterious boy, Jenna let out a sigh of relief.

Her expression remained unchanged as she boarded the public carriage bound for the bustling market district.

…

In the evening, at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, Apartment 601.

Lumian, who had been summoned by Jenna, listened to her findings intently.

Lumian couldn't conceal his surprise and suspicion.

"Is this for real? Are you sure you didn't see it wrong?"

Wasn't this just too much of a coincidence?

Jenna had only laid eyes on the portrait of "I Know Someone" that morning, and in the afternoon, she had tracked down the target at Delta Asylum—a place she had visited just twice. Lumian, Franca, and the Major Arcana and Minor Arcana card holders in Trier had turned up nothing!

The sheer coincidence here made Lumian's instincts tingle with hints of conspiracy and arrangements, robbing him of any tangible joy.

"That's right. Isn't this too darn coincidental…" Franca's demeanor had been skeptical even before Lumian's arrival.

She muttered, "Though it's a classic move for an antisocial, intelligent fellow to hide in an asylum and rub shoulders with the doctors, should he really be unlucky enough to cross paths with a visitor who's seen his wanted poster? There can't be

more than 50 people in Trier who've laid eyes on that wanted poster!"

This tally included Anthony Reid and the inquiries made by the other card holders today.

"Why didn't I know of such a classic scenario…" Jenna mumbled. "But I did stumble upon him. I'm not mistaken. Maybe I've just been lucky lately?"

At this point, she noticed the disbelief etched on Lumian and Franca's faces.

Lumian, a man well-versed in the power of coincidence, pondered and asked, "Recall this morning and see if any other coincidences stand out, or if anything unusual occurred."

Seated in an armchair, Jenna delved deep into her thoughts.

After nearly fifteen minutes, she cussed, "It's business as usual! Uh, there is one thing I've never encountered before…"

"There shouldn't be anything unusual about that, right?"

Lumian honed in on another detail.

"Did he say he was brought here by a lady who loves drinking?"

"Yes," Jenna replied to the two questions with a single word.

Lumian immediately grew suspicious.

Apart from a few dancers, he only knew of two ladies who were quite fond of alcohol. The rest were just casual social drinkers.

One was Madame Hela, and the other was Madam Magician.

The former always carried multiple flasks of liquor with her, while the latter reveled in tasting various alcoholic beverages, and she could even summon a glass of wine from thin air and savor it.

Since the hunt for I Know Someone was a shared mission of the Tarot Club, and Madame Hela hadn't been informed about it, Lumian cautiously deduced that the boy had been brought to Trier by Madam Magician.

Combined with Franca's question about Jenna's "receiving good luck," Lumian believed that the boy possessed extraordinary abilities that could bestow good fortune upon others. Jenna, having experienced this stroke of luck, was naturally fortunate enough to cross paths with "I Know Someone."

As Lumian and Franca fell silent for what felt like minutes, Jenna's unease deepened.

"Is there really a problem with this situation?"

Lumian gazed thoughtfully at his companion and responded, “It’s possible that your luck has taken a favorable turn today, starting with your act of buying ice-cream for that young boy.”

Such exchanges of giving and receiving were not uncommon in the realm of Inevitability. For example, the enhancement of luck often required the recipient to willingly accept the medium and derive some benefit from it. Moreover, there had to be a subjective desire on their part to complete the luck-enhancing ritual.

Therefore, Lumian had a reasonable suspicion that the boy might be a Beyonder of the Monster Pathway, also known as the Fate Pathway. Through a subtle transaction involving ice-cream and the bestowal of good luck, he had orchestrated Jenna’s encounter with I Know Someone.

The phrases like “I didn’t know how to help, so I decided to wait here” or “Buy me ice-cream, and you’ll have good luck” had all the mysterious signs of the Fate domain!

“That’s right…” Franca had clearly considered this possibility.

Jenna immediately understood.

“Are you suggesting that this boy might be an exceptionally powerful Beyonder? That he granted me an abundance of good luck?

“But apart from encountering I Know Someone, I haven’t felt anything extraordinary. I haven’t stumbled upon any money or come across free items.”

Franca sighed, explaining, “Meeting I Know Someone probably consumed all the good luck you were given.”

Lumian abruptly stood up.

“I need to verify this.”

He made his way into Franca’s bedroom and closed the door behind him.

Franca speculated and replied, “He’s going to write a letter.”

“To Madame Hela?” Jenna knew that the woman had a messenger.

Franca couldn’t give a clear answer. “Another lady.”

In her bedroom, Lumian, who had tidied up the altar, promptly received a response from Madam Magician.

“So, that’s how we found I Know Someone. Even as an Astrologer, I find this matter charlatanic.

“There’s no need to doubt that it was indeed a helper we hired. We expended a considerable number of favors and a substantial amount of ice-cream.

“Since there’s a result, take action. I’ll keep an eye on you and help guard against any unforeseen incidents.”

As expected… Lumian grinned.

From Madam Magician’s words, he deduced that the boy wasn’t a member of the Tarot Club. Hence, he wouldn’t participate in shared missions without receiving some form of compensation, which in this case involved favors and ice-cream.

What the hell is up with ice-cream? Can such a powerful Beyonder be moved by ice-cream? Lumian found it absurd and amusing. However, he recalled Baron Brignais’s godson, a rather peculiar individual who could be swayed by delectable treats.

This led him to wonder if Beyonders in a boy’s form had similar “weaknesses.”

Lumian pushed open the door and returned to the living room.

Nervously, Jenna stood up and inquired, “Did you confirm it?”

“He’s a helper with the specific task of bestowing good luck, and your encounter with him was orchestrated by fate. By treating him to ice-cream, you’d chosen the correct path of destiny,” Lumian responded, using the manner of a charlatan.

As a Beyonder with dominion over the Inevitability domain, he held a certain sway over fate.

“Phew…” Jenna let out a sigh of relief, her worries about falling into a trap dissipating.

Seeing Franca rise from her seat, Lumian produced the silver Lie earring with a smirk.

“Let’s head to the asylum now. I can’t wait.”

“Very well,” Franca replied, her inner thoughts sighing.

Ever since Ciel’s arrival, she had been embroiled in constant battles.

It had been just a few days since Loki’s attack!

…

In a four-wheeled, four-seater rental carriage en route to Quartier des Thermes, Lumian gazed out of the window at the black street lamp poles and furrowed his brow.

He muttered to himself in confusion, “Did Jenna truly spot I Know Someone?”

Franca and Jenna turned their attention to him, simultaneously recalling a similar situation:

From their hunt for the padre, Guillaume Bénet, they had encountered two substitutes in succession, and the actual Guillaume Bénet had turned out to be a large dog lounging by the side!

Franca lowered her voice and inquired, “Do you suspect it might be a substitute?”

Drawing lessons from past experiences and expanding their awareness was crucial. After witnessing the padre’s clever deception, failing to consider such possibilities would signify their inadequacy in the Hunter and Demoness pathways.

Lumian pondered for a moment and whispered, “With his issue coming to light and the potential pursuit he might face, wouldn’t I Know Someone be concerned that the ‘pranks’ of the past few months could become a lingering threat?

“If I were in his shoes and couldn’t erase the corresponding traces, I’d leave Trier swiftly and return after some time. Yet, he hasn’t done that.

“This suggests that he either possesses ample confidence that we won’t locate him, or he has something of significance to accomplish in Trier. In that case, remaining in the shadows while presenting a substitute in plain sight would be a clever choice.”

Jenna, puzzled, asked, “Could it be that he also wields Lie or the Substitution Spell you mentioned?”

Lumian chuckled.

“He may not have Lie, but the evil god he believes in governs the Seer domain and ranks as one of the most potent Faceless. With mastery of the corresponding ritualistic magic, he can beseech this deity to alter the appearance of a specific target.”

It was akin to how members of the Tarot Club could summon creatures from the spirit realm in the name of Mr. Fool.

Using Faceless-related ritualistic magic to create a substitute while secretly monitoring in person… But why didn’t he just change his appearance? Why resort to creating a substitute? It would make him virtually untraceable! Franca thought of a dangerous possibility.

Lumian nodded.

“If the individual in Delta Asylum is indeed a substitute, it implies that he serves as a trap and is intentionally using it to lure us in. I Know Someone will

undoubtedly pay close attention to the eventual outcome.

“Consequently, either the extreme peril concealed within the substitute will not only ensnare the pursuer but also cause a significant disturbance, or the two individuals are intimately connected in some mystical manner.

“Don’t be concerned about the first scenario. With a formidable lady guarding against mishaps, the ensuing possibilities will depend on you, Franca…”

If the person in the asylum turned out to be I Know Someone, the situation would be relatively straightforward.

…

Late at night, in a room on the third floor of Delta Asylum’s eastern wing.

A pair of gold-rimmed glasses sat on the bedside table, reflecting the moonlight filtering into the room. The patient in the bed was fast asleep.

Suddenly, a shadowy figure opened the substantial door adorned with iron bars and quietly entered.

With a polite grip, the intruder gently shut the door, rendering the room impervious to external sounds.

The entire interior space seemed to be sealed.

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Chapter 404 - 404 Patient

404 Patient

Lumian harnessed the power of the Decency brooch, distorting the door and sealing the entire room.

The patient's eyes remained tightly shut, lost in a deep slumber. His facial features, hairstyle, and hair color undeniably matched those of I Know Someone.

As Lumian observed this slumbering figure, who had no realization of his intrusion, he began to suspect that this might be a substitute.

As suggested by Madam Magician's letter, I Know Someone was at least a Sequence 6 Hypnotist of the Psychiatrist pathway, with a slight chance of being a Sequence 5 Dreamwalker. On either pathway, these individuals were skilled observers, unlikely to sleep soundly in the presence of an intruder.

The conundrum now lay in discerning the trap with such a substitution.

Beneath the faint moonlight filtering through the curtains, the patient on the bed suddenly snapped open his eyes.

In those flaxen-colored eyes, Lumian's image was instantly mirrored.

Simultaneously, Lumian once more glimpsed the dark void, the countless twinkling stars, and the mysterious symbol that had come to life, forming an invisible door.

A voice resonated within his heart and ears, seemingly emanating from the depths of the void and the source of his consciousness.

"Pass through it. Pass through this formless door, and you will gain a transformative experience in your life and boundless knowledge…"

"Everyone possesses godhood and can hear the voice of this world's origin. To hear it clearly, you must open this invisible door and step inside…"

Lumian's head throbbed as he "witnessed" the gradual opening of the formless door. Each word from the voice transformed into a living, peculiar entity within his heart.

Once more, the voice echoed, its tone tinged with perplexity and confusion. It muttered to itself, "Where is the end of the world? What did the universe resemble at its inception…

“Which deity brought all of this into existence, and who created Him…

“What lies beyond the confines of the universe? How do other worlds differ…

“What sets human nature apart from godhood? Does true self-awareness equate to human nature or godhood…

“Where lies the demarcation between madness and reason? Is madness the ultimate destination for every living being…”

Lumian’s head throbbed with agony as he absorbed these questions, a fusion of mystical contemplation and the pursuit of answers to profound philosophical queries. It was the first time in a long while that he felt the sensation of a steel drill boring into his skull, stirring his delicate brain.

Moreover, these questions triggered bizarre alterations in his spirituality and his surroundings.

Madness surged forth, as if probing the boundaries of sanity. The enveloping darkness seemed to take on human nature, visibly writhing. The bed before him and the floor beneath his feet gradually etched out bizarre patterns. Even though Lumian couldn’t see them, his body was suddenly consumed by an intense itch, as if yearning to shed his outermost layer of skin…

“Is there something that surpasses all limitations and conceptual thinking…” the voice persisted in questioning the void.

Lumian found himself powerless to resist or halt this transformation. All he could do was witness it helplessly as an overwhelming terror descended, his head throbbing.

The colossal dendrite appeared as if it had sprung forth from a divine realm, and each silver-white “branch” emitted a crackling sound.

Rumble!

As the silver lightning struck the patient on the bed, Lumian was assaulted by a deafening thunderclap that reverberated through his eardrums and resonated within his soul.

The strange creature that had animated those thought-provoking questions convulsed his body, significantly easing the throbbing pain in his head, leaving behind only a disorienting sensation caused by the deafening roar.

A terrifying cascade of lightning surged across the patient on the bed, sending waves of agony and paralysis coursing through Lumian’s skin, even though he stood a few steps away.

In the midst of this electric frenzy, a holy chant echoed faintly, as if proclaiming, “I came, I saw, I recorded.” The ward darkened, as if it had been thrust into a

mysterious realm, isolated from the outside world by some insurmountable force.

Lumian exhaled and shifted his gaze back to the bed. There, he beheld the patient's entire form transformed into a pitch-black, charcoal-like substance, emitting an eerie burnt odor.

The body, still clad in tattered hospital gown, bedsheets, and blanket, began to dissipate, morphing into a dark silhouette.

On the surface of this shadowy figure, cracks materialized, each adorned with mystical symbols and patterns. These formations resembled eyes or myriad mouths that incessantly opened and closed.

Before Lumian could fully fathom this transformation, his vision was flooded with pure, radiant, golden sunlight.

Once more, the ethereal, holy voice resonated in his ears.

When his vision settled back into normalcy, only a faint black mark remained on the scorched surface of the bed, twisting in an uncanny, serpent-like manner.

It's indeed a trap… Lumian mused, his lack of surprise evident.

He also deduced that both the patient and one of Loki's marionettes were recipients of the same evil god's boon based on the starry void and the formless door formed by wandering symbols. The substitute for I Know Someone clearly occupied a higher Sequence.

Had Loki and I Know Someone once targeted a secret organization that worshiped an evil deity?

This is the will of the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth? What did He seek to achieve?

Did this all somehow tie into I Know Someone's decision to remain in Trier?

Is this substitute merely a taunting jest aimed at those who pursue them?

I know you're on the hunt for me, and I'm aware of the clues you may uncover. Yet, I'm intentionally granting you a glimmer of hope?

Thoughts raced through Lumian's mind like lightning as he attempted to analyze the current situation from I Know Someone's perspective and extract clues about the fugitive's whereabouts.

Given the level of danger posed by the patient, Lumian deduced that both I Know Someone and Loki would have struggled to capture him alive and recruit him into their team.

With Loki possessing a marionette with a similar pathway, it seemed clear that the patient hadn't actively and consciously cooperated with them.

Leveraging his professional skills as a Psychiatrist, I Know Someone had likely skillfully guided the patient, fostering a sense of trust and camaraderie. Eventually, he reached a point where he could “convince” the patient, enabling him to perform a ritual and request a change in appearance.

Glancing at the iron-barred window, Lumian noticed that the deep darkness had receded. Crimson moonlight filtered through the relatively thin glass and bathed the ward in its glow.

Conversely, the darkness that had once been typical at Delta Asylum’s periphery had intensified. The void seemed distorted, as if encased in a spherical barrier.

Madam Magician hadn’t employed any additional abilities after dealing with the dangerous patient. She had merely concealed the entire asylum and its surrounding lawn.

It appeared as though she was implying that Lumian needed to handle this situation independently. She only assisted by preventing any disturbances from alerting Trier’s official Beyonders.

Lumian breathed a sigh of relief. Starting from his search for Loki, he quickly filtered through the matters related to April Fool’s.

Slowly, a conjecture formed, weaving together the pieces of the puzzle into a cohesive “narrative.”

I Know Someone had once been connected to Delta Asylum, whether as a doctor, nurse, or patient. One day, he had stumbled upon a peculiar patient who incessantly posed profound philosophical questions.

Guided by the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings, I Know Someone had initiated interactions with the patient. During this process, he had likely sensed the presence of an evil god’s bestowed lurking around the patient. Consequently, with the assistance of Loki, they had driven away these problematic figures and gained control over the strange patient. Loki had even managed to gain a marionette.

Upon Loki’s resurrection, I Know Someone, who had been alerted, had leveraged the patient’s trust in him to perform ritualistic magic and beseech the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings, resulting in his transformation into a substitute and a walking trap.

As for I Know Someone himself, he must have successfully altered his appearance; his whereabouts now unknown.

Amidst Lumian’s frustration, he suddenly thought of something.

Jenna had indeed encountered the substitute for I Know Someone, thanks to good luck.

However, encountering a substitute, one designed as a trap, hardly constituted good luck.

This was unlucky!

That was unless they could somehow use the substitute to trace back to I Know Someone or if Jenna had encountered both the substitute and the real I Know Someone but failed to recognize or directly see him!

Both scenarios pointed toward a high probability that the elusive I Know Someone was still lurking within the asylum!

Even if the trap ultimately failed, pursuers would likely conclude that I Know Someone had long since relocated to a new hiding place.

Beneath an oil lamp lay the darkest and most easily overlooked spot!

With this revelation, Lumian acted swiftly. He spun around, heaved open the heavy door, and sprinted into the asylum's corridor.

With a resounding crash, he burst through a window at the stairwell's corner, landing on the lawn encircled by the main building and its adjoining structures.

Simultaneously, he employed the Niese Face to transform into the patient he had encountered earlier.

In a commanding voice, Lumian bellowed his questions to the cosmos from the lawn:

"Where is the end of the world? What did the universe resemble at its inception…

"Which deity brought all of this into existence, and who created Him…"

His voice resonated throughout the asylum, reaching into every room.

A few seconds later, Franca's voice echoed in Lumian's ears.

"There's an abnormality in the doctor's duty room and the nurse's workstation on the first floor, as well as in the first ward on the third floor near the west wing."

Upon hearing his companion's report, Lumian couldn't help but chuckle.

He pressed his hands against the void before him, instantly igniting crimson flames.

The flames spread swiftly, illuminating the invisible spiderwebs that enshrouded the entire building.

These intricate layers of spiderwebs extended into every room, diligently monitoring the movements of all its inhabitants.

This complex setup had consumed nearly half of Franca's spirituality and required a significant amount of time to prepare and maintain.

The crimson flames transformed into three blazing serpents, each colossal in size, which slithered through the spiderwebs toward the doctor's duty room and nurse's workstation on the first floor, as well as the ward on the third floor.

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Chapter 405 - 405 No Reservations

405 No Reservations

The blazing serpents reflected in the eyes of the doctor on duty, the three night nurses, and the patient who had woken up. Fear appeared on their faces, and they turned around in various panicked movements. As they fled in the opposite direction of the flames, they shouted, “Fire! Fire!”

As their voices echoed, the flaming serpents burned the invisible threads of spider silk, accompanied by a scorching wind formed by the clash of cold and heat. It pursued them relentlessly, blocking the exit from the room and forcing them into a corner.

The five of them acted normally. They darted around, searching for a safe escape, wrapping themselves in blankets, and attempting to force their way through the wall of flames. They also rushed to another window, with the intention of jumping down.

It seemed Lumian had misjudged the situation. Any abnormal movements didn’t necessarily mean I Know Someone. If this continued, he risked incinerating five innocent people.

However, the three crimson flaming serpents showed no hesitation. They continued to pursue the doctor on duty, the night nurses, and the mental patient, emanating an icy, ruthless madness that showed no regard for human life.

As the blazing serpents closed in on their targets, a few of them began to show signs of despair. The patient on the third-floor ward suddenly halted and turned around.

Grayish-white, stone-like scales sprouted on his once ordinary face, covering his skin that was not concealed by the blue-and-white-striped hospital gown.

In an instant, he transformed into a horrifying, lizard-like figure. The grayish-white scales resisted the scorching flames and aided him in breaking through the barrier of the crimson serpent.

Sensing this transformation through the flames, Lumian’s lips curled into an eerie grin.

According to the information provided in Madam Magician’s letter, Beyonders of the Spectator pathway at Sequence 6 Hypnotist would gain an ability known as Dragon Scales. This ability allowed them to manifest grayish-white scales on their skin, greatly reducing and resisting damage.

This ability was closely tied to the Spectator pathway's Mythical Creature form, as every high-ranking Spectator ultimately transformed into a dragon—a mind dragon!

The appearance of Dragon Scales confirmed that the patient in the west wing on the third floor was at least a Sequence 6 Beyonder of the Spectator pathway. Combined with the trap and his unusual movements, the patient's identity became evident—I Know Someone!

Lumian activated the black mark on his right shoulder and used his ability to traverse the spirit world, instantly appearing in the ward.

During this hunt, he refrained from wearing the Lie earring or carrying the Flog boxing gloves. This was because his adversary was a formidable Psychiatrist, and any openings in his emotions or desires could be easily exploited.

As Lumian's figure vanished from the lawn, the crimson fire serpents, which had expanded from consuming flammable materials in the doctor's duty room and nurse's workstation, abruptly dissipated. They transformed into glimmering specks of light that disappeared before the faces of the despairing and terrified onlookers.

Apart from the charred remnants of various items, there was little evidence of the inferno they had narrowly escaped.

On the third floor of Delta Asylum, Lumian emerged from a room adjacent to the west wing. His gaze locked onto the patient, whose body was covered in grayish-white scales, and whose eyes emitted a faint golden hue.

He didn't exchange pleasantries or make inquiries. Instead, he opened his mouth and let out a sharp exclamation: "Ha!"

An imperceptible yellow beam shot forth from Lumian's mouth, aimed at the suspected I Know Someone.

However, at a distance of two to three meters, the pale-yellow aura beam by the Spell of Harrumph brushed past the Beyonder and struck the iron-barred glass window behind him.

This was one of a Hypnotist's Beyonder abilities. It could forcefully hypnotize an enemy in battle, causing them to act irrationally or make incorrect judgments. However, such actions couldn't directly harm the hypnotized person, and the effect would wear off quickly as they regained their senses.

Seizing the opportunity, I Know Someone's light-gold eyes widened, reflecting Lumian's male Aurore form.

Lumian's head jerked backward, as if caught in a whirlwind.

His emotions swirled with a mixture of joy and hatred. Crimson flames surged beneath his skin, and his eyes glinted with a sinister madness.

Frenzy!

This was a Psychiatrist's Beyonder ability designed to trigger intense emotions and destabilize the target's mental state, causing them to enter a Frenzied state and suffer severe mental damage. If the target had existing psychological issues or strong emotions, they might even lose control when subjected to Frenzy.

Before undergoing psychiatric treatment from Madam Susie and Madam Justice, encountering I Know Someone in this state could send Lumian spiraling into madness, turning him into a monstrous figure.

At that moment, magma-like blood dripped from his nose. His mind was in disarray, and he instinctively took deep breaths, temporarily losing the ability to execute his planned moves.

I Know Someone refrained from launching another attack on Lumian at that moment. Firstly, causing the other party to lose control or perish would lead to the immediate release of the high-level creature sealed within his body, a sight that could drive even a Beyonder below the demigod level to mental and physical collapse. Secondly, since Muggle's brother was present, it was likely that Hidden Blade wasn't far away. The invisible spider silk that had been ignited was likely her handiwork.

In this dire situation, I Know Someone's first instinct was to swiftly exit the battlefield, escape Delta Asylum, and find a place to conceal himself once more.

In an instant, he retrieved a broken arrow from the pocket of his blue-and-white-striped hospital gown.

The broken arrow looked ancient, with an obsidian-like arrowhead at its tip, adorned with mysterious patterns.

With a squelching sound, I Know Someone thrust the obsidian arrow into his own chest.

The item sprang to life, greedily absorbing the crimson blood that flowed forth.

I Know Someone immediately sprinted toward the tightly sealed door, leaving behind an afterimage.

Despite the grayish-white Dragon Scales covering his face, he exuded an uncanny charm, as if he had transformed into a dashing young dragon.

This was the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty. By piercing it into his chest and feeding it his blood, it temporarily transformed I Know Someone into a Vampire. This granted him extraordinary speed, accelerated regeneration, and a few spell-like abilities.

Bang!

As I Know Someone pushed open the heavy, solid door of the asylum ward, he failed to dart into the corridor. He collided with an ice barrier that had formed at some point.

Amidst the sounds of cracking and shattering, the ice wall crumbled, but it also caused I Know Someone to lose his balance and tumble to the ground.

Most of the shattered ice failed to penetrate his Dragon Scales. Only a handful managed to breach his defenses, leaving traces of blood in their wake.

Thanks to the Vampire's rapid regenerative abilities, the minor injuries swiftly began to heal.

I Know Someone saw no need to rise to his feet. As his light-gold eyes flickered, invisible waves radiated from him, enveloping the surroundings.

Awe!

This was a Psychiatrist's Awe, also referred to as Dragon Might or Mass Chaos. It had the power to instantly induce panic in a single target or all living beings within its range, plunging them into chaos.

Relying on Dragon Might to maintain control of the situation, I Know Someone agilely leaped up, intending to put some distance between himself and Franca as he sprinted down the corridor.

He refrained from attacking her at this moment because he understood that Demonesses possessed abilities like Mirror Substitution and Staff Substitution. Trying to kill her or cripple her combat abilities with a single strike would only delay his escape.

As he vaulted out of the shattered ice, I Know Someone caught a glimpse of the ward, now empty.

Lumian Lee appeared to have recovered from the effects of Frenzy and used teleportation to evade Awe's influence in the nick of time!

Just as this realization crossed I Know Someone's mind, he saw the male version of Aurore—Lumian—materialize in front of him.

Without hesitation, I Know Someone's golden eyes focused on Lumian, preparing to cast Awe once more.

In the next moment, Lumian's figure vanished again.

He had employed Spirit World Traversal twice in quick succession!

Almost simultaneously, I Know Someone's pupils dilated, and a shiver ran down his spine. The hairs on the back of his neck stood on end.

This time, Lumian's destination was behind him.

It was akin to Blink!

Lumian's figure instantly materialized behind I Know Someone, witnessing a dense black fog emanating from the latter's body, an attempt to evade to the side of the corridor.

Too slow! Lumian harrumphed, sending two white beams of light shooting from his nostrils to encompass the area ahead.

I Know Someone couldn't evade and was struck by the white beams as he was thrown to the ground, tumbling twice.

Lumian breathed heavily, feeling drained as his head throbbed with pain.

Three consecutive "teleportations" and two rounds of using the Spell of Harrumph and other abilities had completely sapped his energy.

If it hadn't been for the substantial amount of Pyromaniac potion he had digested compared to when he hunted the padre, sustaining this level of expenditure would have been extremely challenging.

Franca, who had recovered from Awe, approached and shook her head in disapproval.

"No need for all that. It's not like you don't have assistance."

Why go all out when help was available?

Even if the Major Arcana card holders hadn't been lurking in the shadows, and even if I Know Someone had managed to escape the asylum, wouldn't he have left behind some blood that could be used for a curse?

Lumian didn't respond, making his way over to the unconscious form of I Know Someone.

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Chapter 406 - 406 Inevitability-like Ending

406 Inevitability-like Ending

Staring at the unconscious enemy in the corridor, Lumian refrained from an immediate attack. He squatted down in silence.

He retrieved a bottle of sedative obtained from the Bliss Society's Rentas, unscrewed the cap, and brought it to the patient's nose.

Franca glanced over and advised, "Remove the broken arrow from his chest first. Otherwise, I think his body can handle most of the sedative's effects."

The grayish-white stone-like scales on the Beyonder suspected to be I Know Someone slowly dissipated due to the unconsciousness in spirituality brought about by the Spell of Harrumph.

Lumian nodded and used the hand holding the bottle cap to carefully remove the obsidian arrow.

Franca breathed a sigh of relief and continued, "The question now is how do we confirm if this guy is the real I Know Someone.

"A powerful Hypnotist can manipulate a Beyonder of the same pathway and Sequence, altering their self-awareness and making them believe they are 'I Know Someone.' They can substitute the real deal to appear in all sorts of occasions, completing different pranks and fight any adversaries.

"F*ck, why does it seem more troublesome than dealing with a Marionettist!?"

What Franca meant was that the enemy in front of her might also be a victim, someone whose perceptions had been altered to make them believe they were "I Know Someone."

This possibility couldn't be ruled out, so she wasn't capable of steeling herself to kill him before channeling his spirit.

Furthermore, Lumian's remaining truth serum wouldn't work in this case. The hypnotized person would only tell what they believed to be true.

Lumian screwed the cap back onto the sedative bottle and thought for a moment before suggesting, "Let's set up a ritual and seek confirmation from Mr. Fool. Since Loki can use Celestial Worthy's help to locate members of the Curly-Haired

Baboons Research Society within a certain range, we can employ a similar method to activate the special aura on I Know Someone. If it's there, he's real. If not, he's fake."

"What if he's a member of the Research Society who was captured by Loki and I Know Someone? In the past, several people went missing without their deaths being confirmed, including some Psychiatrists." Franca began to suspect the source of I Know Someone's Beyonder characteristics that allowed him to advance to Sequence 7.

Research Society members they had hunted?

Lumian pondered for a moment and replied, "In that case, let Jenna in. She might still have some lingering good luck in this aspect. If she doesn't encounter anyone else, it proves that the unconscious one is I Know Someone.

"You're responsible for protecting Jenna…"

Before Lumian could finish, Madam Magician's voice echoed in his ears, "There's no need to go through so much trouble."

Crouching in front of the unconscious person, Lumian sensed the space around him come alive, contracting inward and swallowing the Beyonder suspected to be I Know Someone.

"Wow," Franca exclaimed, and Lumian slowly stood up.

The two of them waited patiently. In just 20 to 30 seconds, the Beyonder in the blue-and-white-striped hospital gown was ejected from the void.

Immediately after, they heard Madam Magician's response: "It's 'I Know Someone.'"

…

Beneath the crimson moon in the sky, the Delta Asylum loomed, its darkness even denser and curved into an eerie arc compared to the surrounding night.

On the rooftop of the three-story grayish-blue building, the shadowy Magician turned to her companion and said, "Apart from the lunatic, there are no hidden dangers or traps.

"Did I overreact and overestimate the situation?"

Justice, resembling a dream, replied calmly, "There's nothing wrong with your choice. It's never wrong no matter how much importance you attach to matters related to that Celestial Worthy.

"Only by paying enough attention each time can we avoid being suddenly deceived and falling into a true trap."

Magician nodded slightly, closed the notebook in her hand, and cast her gaze towards the third-floor corridor which wasn't in her line of sight.

…

Upon hearing Madam Magician's conclusion, Lumian let out a chuckle.

He put away the remaining half of the sedative and turned to Franca, saying, "We can let Jenna in now."

Franca nodded and disappeared into the shadows along the corridor.

Lumian looked down at the seemingly ordinary I Know Someone, his eyes deep and a sly smile on his lips.

The effects of the Spell of Harrumph should have worn off long ago, but the Bliss Society's sedative was still doing its job.

Considering I Know Someone's physique, this sedative wouldn't last much longer. However, Lumian was prepared for this moment.

At that very instant, the Delta Asylum was in chaos due to the fire and shouting. Particularly on the first floor, the commotion was intense. The duty doctor and a few burly guards patrolled the area to ensure that no tinder remnants remained.

Meanwhile, Jenna and Franca skillfully navigated through the shadows and ascended to the third floor.

Lumian took a sheepskin from Guillaume Bénet, the padre, and spread it on the ground.

He carefully wrapped I Know Someone in it.

After a brief contemplation, Lumian raised the obsidian arrow in his hand and plunged it into I Know Someone's left eye.

The excruciating pain jolted I Know Someone awake, and his left eye turned bloodshot.

Almost simultaneously, he heard a sinister chuckle.

"Sheep!"

Amidst the echoing Hermes words, I Know Someone, cocooned in the ritual sheepskin, was instantly engulfed by dark light, rendering him powerless.

When the dark light finally subsided, he had transformed into a grayish-white sheep.

Lumian withdrew the obsidian arrow from the crushed eyeball and swiftly plunged it into I Know Someone's right eye.

A blood-curdling scream echoed through the room as Lumian pulled out the arrow. He pressed down on the struggling "sheep" with one hand and stroked its head with the other, a sinister smile playing on his lips.

"Now, we can finally have a good chat."

While Lumian engaged in this whispering conversation, he tossed the obsidian arrow to Jenna.

Next, Lumian produced an ordinary bottle of wound medicine and meticulously applied it to I Know Someone's blood-colored eye socket. He wrapped the other party's eyes in layers of white bandages he had prepared.

Only then did I Know Someone, who had awakened from his coma and was enduring intense pain, regained some composure. He attempted to use his abilities, but to no avail.

Franca and Jenna watched Lumian intently as he continued to tend to the transformed sheep, I Know Someone, feeling a mix of curiosity and unease. Initially, Jenna had wanted to assist Lumian in extracting information or exacting revenge, but now, she felt that this scenario was enough.

She shifted her attention to the obsidian broken arrow in her hand but noticed no negative effects. She wondered if it was one of the mystical items Franca had mentioned before.

As Lumian retrieved a brownish-yellow twine he had prepared in advance and began to wrap it around the sheep's neck, the duty doctor, alerted by the sheep's bleating, arrived on the third floor with several burly guards.

Franca and Jenna swiftly concealed themselves in the shadows, while Lumian, disguised as Aurore, calmly turned and led the sheep to the end of the corridor.

Crimson flames erupted from Lumian's body, which had regained some of its spirituality, and blazed fiercely in the corridor.

The duty doctor and the guards dared not approach, witnessing a figure walking through the flames, heading to the end of the annex corridor.

The figure was also guiding a sheep. It resisted, unwilling to leave, but the rope around its neck forced it to move forward.

After being dragged on the ground for a while, the sheep, its neck tightening and its breathing becoming labored, finally stood up and followed.

By the time the flames in the corridor abruptly extinguished, sparing any damage to the adjacent rooms, the doctor on duty and the guards had lost all trace of the

man and the sheep.

Am I hallucinating… The situation was so odd and unbelievable that these individuals shared the same thoughts.

Meanwhile, the charred corridor stood as evidence that a fire had indeed occurred, miraculously without harming anyone.

Leaving a guard to report the incident to the nearest police headquarters, the duty doctor returned to his office on the first floor in a bewildered state.

As he sank into his chair, he couldn't help but wonder, Could it be that the infernal being associated with fire has emerged from the abyss? Is its signature to lead a sheep? Is this the embodiment of flames?

His thoughts grew more fantastical with each passing moment, and he couldn't shake the feeling that he should have gone straight to the cathedral to consult the bishops and padres rather than involve the police.

Knock, knock, knock!

He heard a knock on the door.

The doctor on duty jolted in his chair. He straightened up and responded with a deep voice, "Come in, please."

As the door creaked open, the doctor's eyes froze.

It was the blond devil, accompanied by the sheep with its eyes wrapped in white bandages, and its grayish-white face stained with blood.

"I need to trouble you with something," Lumian said calmly as he led I Know Someone into the doctor's office. "My sheep exhibits severe anti-human tendencies and extreme violence. I want to treat its mental illness."

How… Before he could formulate a response, the handsome blond devil inquired, "Do you know how to perform a lobotomy?"

"Yes, a little," the doctor on duty replied subconsciously. "But it's a sheep…"

Could the brain structure be the same?

As he contemplated this, he watched the sheep struggle frantically in its bindings, unable to escape.

Lumian chuckled.

"It doesn't matter. We can give it a try. It's just a sheep. If it dies, so be it. We can still roast it."

With that, he dragged the unruly sheep toward a nearby treatment table, using his hands and feet to pin it down.

If the patient had been human, the doctor, lacking experience and prohibited from performing a lobotomy, would never have dared to attempt it. However, because it was a sheep, he had no reservations.

In an effort to avoid antagonizing the arsonist devil and cooperate while awaiting the arrival of the police, the doctor on duty cautiously approached the treatment table.

He said hesitantly, “I need an ice pick.”

His intention was to create an excuse to go to the ice warehouse and distance himself from the arsonist devil. However, just as he finished speaking, a hand emerged from the shadows, offering him a sharp icicle.

W-what’s going on… In his shock, the doctor vaguely heard the words, “No need to thank me.”

Numbly, he accepted the thin icicle and unwrapped the white bandage covering the sheep’s head.

The sheep’s struggle intensified.

Assessing the damage to its eye sockets, the doctor on duty inserted the thin, sharp icicle through the crack and carefully manipulated it, stirring its brain’s frontal lobe.

After a few moments of struggle, the grayish-white sheep abruptly fell silent.

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Chapter 407 - 407 Reward for Good Luck

407 Reward for Good Luck

After the surgery, the blind sheep stepped off the treatment table, calm and docile, no longer resisting. The duty doctor felt like he was in a dream.

The doctor watched in a daze as the arsonist devil guided the blind sheep—now cured of its mental illness—out of the room and disappeared into the crimson moonlit night.

Wherever they went, crimson flames ignited the white bandages and barely visible fur.

In the blazing flames, black fire flowed like a river, “cleansing” away the remaining icicles, footprints, and any other traces.

The doctor felt no immediate danger and watched in a daze, as if enjoying a spectacular fireworks show.

After an unknown amount of time, all the flames subsided. The guard who had been dispatched returned to the Delta Asylum with a group of black-uniformed police officers.

“Why did it take you so long?” the doctor blurted out instinctively.

The leading officer cursed angrily, “Son of a bitch, we were ambushed in the shadows on the way here. Someone was shooting at us from the darkness!”

…

In Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, in the market district.

After securing I Know Someone to one of the dining table’s sturdy legs, Lumian paid the sheep no mind. He lay on the sofa in the living room and pretended to be asleep.

His appearance had been altered back by Lie, and the Decency brooch had long been taken off.

Franca glanced at the sheep, which stood silently and didn’t attempt to escape with the dining table, and asked, “Aren’t we going to interrogate him now?”

She avoided looking at Lumian because he had become so irritating that she felt like punching him. Even the sheep, now a pacifist, was eager to do the same.

Lumian's voice remained calm as he replied, "I'll question him once I've regained my spirituality."

That makes sense. It's safer this way. After all, I Know Someone is now a sheep with his frontal lobe removed. He can't use his abilities or put up resistance… Franca, dressed in an Assassin suit, averted her gaze and headed to her bedroom to avoid losing control of her hands, black flames, frost, or spider silk.

She wasn't worried that any accidents might occur prior to the interrogation, leading to I Know Someone's bizarre death or him turning into a monster due to losing control. Madam Magician and the Major Arcana card holder had already confirmed I Know Someone's identity. They must have seized the opportunity to obtain the most important information.

Jenna, holding the broken obsidian arrow, approached the divan with a warped expression.

"Your trophy."

She offered the obsidian arrow to Lumian, who hadn't yet closed his eyes.

Lumian didn't take it and calmly said, "This is your reward for your good luck.

Why does he sound like a circus fortune-teller… Jenna didn't refuse. After mumbling to herself, she quickly turned around and entered Franca's bedroom.

It had to be said that after her companion advanced to Demoness of Pleasure, even as a woman, she would blush and feel her ears heat up when she saw her change her clothes.

After changing into comfortable home clothes, Franca used Magic Mirror Divination to get a rough understanding of the name, abilities, and negative effects of the obsidian arrow.

"Name: Arrow of the Bloodthirsty.

"Ability: Plunge it into the chest where the heart and let it absorb blood. The user will gain potent self-healing and regeneration abilities, along with exceptional physical attributes. Whether it's speed, agility, the ability to communicate with animals, vision, smell, or hearing, they will all be greatly enhanced. Their charisma will also receive a significant boost.

"In addition, the user will gain Dark domain spell-like abilities such as Abyss Shackles, Claw of Corrosion, and Wings of Darkness.

"Negative effects:

“While in use, you will despise sunlight and crave blood.

“Your blood will be continuously drained by the item until you succumb to excessive blood loss. You must constantly monitor your condition and remove the broken arrow in time.

“The more you use it, the more likely it is to cause subtle changes in your body. If these accumulate beyond a limit, it might even lead to bodily collapse. Note: Try not to use it for more than three minutes at a time. It’s best to use it with intervals of more than three days. This way, your body will have a chance to recover and prevent any mutations.

“Avoid using it during a full moon. While it can enhance your condition, it can also easily lead to illusions and danger.”

“Not a bad mystical item,” Franca praised sincerely as she handed the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty back to Jenna. “Carrying it doesn’t have any negative effects. Such a mystical item could fetch over 40,000 verl d’or at various mysticism gatherings.”

Holding the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty, Jenna pondered and said, “If I give it to you, will that settle the debt I owe you?”

She believed she owed Franca 30,000 verl d’or.

Franca chuckled.

“Don’t worry. This Arrow of the Bloodthirsty can significantly boost your strength, providing you with true self-preservation abilities. You can sell it later once your Sequence has advanced to the point where it’s no longer useful.

“Take your time paying back the money you owe me. There’s no rush.”

Jenna fell silent for a few moments before nodding in agreement.

…

Lumian slept until 6 a.m., feeling refreshed but still with a slight throbbing in his head.

As he sat up and looked around, he noticed that the sheep I Know Someone had transformed into was standing quietly by the dining table, its empty eye sockets filled with dried blood.

Lumian chuckled.

He led the sheep into the living room and poured the remaining truth serum into its mouth.

With that task completed, Lumian recited an incantation in Hermes.

“His Grace.”

A dark light flashed, and the grayish-white sheepskin split open, revealing I Know Someone’s body in a blue-and-white-striped hospital gown.

Lumian guided him to a chair and had him sit down. Staring into his empty blood-red eye sockets, he smiled and sighed.

“As I mentioned yesterday, we can finally have a good chat.”

The calm I Know Someone remained silent.

Lumian retreated to the sofa and sat down. He patiently waited for the truth serum to take effect before asking, “What’s your name, what was your original occupation, and why were you in the Delta Asylum?”

He began with the simplest questions, using the truth serum to guide the other’s instinctive responses.

I Know Someone’s voice was unremarkable, yet strangely compelling.

“My name is Pierre Theuriau. I was originally one of the deputy editors of Basic Medicine.

“I once mentioned that I know someone who ended up in an asylum due to negligence and overconfidence. Well, that someone was me. I was obsessed with manipulating the minds of others and didn’t pay enough attention to my own issues. One day, I just lost my mind.

“When I finally regained consciousness, I found myself in the Delta Asylum. Fortunately, I was only mentally unstable and didn’t completely lose control. I still had some sense of self-preservation and didn’t unleash my Beyonder powers recklessly. If I had, they would have sent me to the Inquisition.”

The person you mentioned is indeed yourself… After discovering that “I Know Someone” was hiding in the asylum, Lumian gained a new understanding of what he had said back then.

He pressed further, “Now that you’ve regained your consciousness and the ability to think, why do you choose to remain in the Delta Asylum?”

I Know Someone didn’t show any mockery or amusement. He answered calmly, “I find the asylum fascinating. The thought patterns, mental states, and mental constructs of the patients here are significantly different from those of ordinary people. They deserve observation, research, and analysis.

“Moreover, some of them have gone mad due to illness, while others have become mentally unstable due to other factors. The latter group includes individuals who have come into contact with the mysterious and abnormal.”

“Including the one that posed as you?” Lumian asked, seeking confirmation.

I Know Someone nodded slowly.

“Yes, he’s quite special. I’ve been observing him for a long time. He’s like a philosopher, constantly posing unusual questions. Patients close to him, nurses who care for him, and even doctors who treat him have gradually shifted toward his mental state. There were also guardians with hidden supernatural abilities lurking around him.

“We dealt with the guardians and worked to gain his trust. Everything went smoothly. We learned that they are part of an organization called the Entry Persons and practice a secretive ritual known as Midoro’s Worship. It allows one’s Astral Projection to ascend to various heavenly domains and witness extraordinary phenomena. They can touch the fringes of immortality and gain knowledge and corresponding abilities, enabling them to undergo a fundamental transformation behind the formless door.”

Entry Persons… Formless door… Lumian memorized the information and continued asking,

“After Loki’s resurrection and his given warning, why didn’t you immediately flee Trier?”

I Know Someone’s response lacked any emotion as he said, “How lame would that be? We’d have to eliminate a few pursuers before making our escape.”

So that’s the reason… Lumian thought there must be something significant that had kept I Know Someone in Trier.

“Then why didn’t you go into hiding somewhere else?”

I Know Someone replied calmly,”I want to witness the despair and suffering of those chasing me.”

Using my life for amusement… Lumian couldn’t help but chuckle.

“Do you not realize the strength of the Tarot Club?”

I Know Someone pondered for a moment and then said, “The secret organization that uses tarot cards as their code names? What do they have to do with you?”

Upon hearing this, Lumian burst into laughter as he bent over, his amusement clearly exaggerated.

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Chapter 408 - 408 Motive

408 Motive

Amidst exaggerated laughter, the doors of the two bedrooms creaked open.

Franca and Jenna appeared at the door, casting puzzled glances at Lumian.

“What’s so funny?” Franca muttered as she approached.

How could he interrogate a criminal to get a reaction akin to watching a comedy performance?

Lumian stopped laughing and remarked, “Ignorance can lead to many dangers, as can arrogance. And having ignorance and arrogance makes it almost irredeemable.”

Observing this, Jenna retreated to the bedroom and closed the door.

She knew there were certain matters between Ciel and Franca that were best left unknown to her.

“Why? Is this guy really ignorant and arrogant?” Franca used her right hand to quickly tidy her disheveled hair after waking up.

She settled into the recliner and fixed her gaze on I Know Someone, who remained composed and emotionless.

Lumian recounted how I Know Someone found it pointless to simply escape and insisted on seeking some amusement. He also mentioned his ignorance regarding the pursuer’s connection to the Tarot Club.

Franca was left speechless.

She couldn’t decide if this core member of April Fool’s was highly professional and committed to his principles or simply arrogant and ignorant.

After a few moments, Franca glanced back at the guest bedroom door.

“Jenna is getting more involved in our affairs. Sooner or later, she would uncover our true faiths and the secret organization supporting us…”

Lumian said nonchalantly,”It’s simple. Mr. Fool is an officially recognized orthodox god. In a few days, take Jenna to Lavigny Docks and reveal who we truly worship and whose blessings we receive. Ask her if she wants to secretly

convert to Mr. Fool. If she declines, that's okay too."

"Okay." Franca nodded solemnly.

Lumian refocused his attention on I Know Someone, who remained remarkably composed, and he redirected the conversation.

"Why were the lot of you targeting Aurore, Muggle?"

I Know Someone seemed to be discussing something unrelated to himself.

"Because many members of the Research Society were praising her, we decided to embarrass her."

"What kind of logic is that?" Franca blurted out. "You want to tease people when they are praised?"

I Know Someone nodded gently.

"Breaking the idealized image in the minds of many people is part of the spirit of pranks. Their reactions bring us immense satisfaction."

Franca's face flushed with anger. She wanted to unleash a tirade but restrained herself due to her lacking vocabulary.

She took a deep breath and exhaled slowly.

"So, do you even remember what happiness and joy are? Do you still experience these emotions?"

Lumian let out a long sigh and asked,"And then?"

I Know Someone wore a nostalgic expression.

"Capitalizing on Muggle's visit to our team to trade, I occasionally offered her helpful advice. She began to trust me more, even sharing her concerns with me as a psychiatrist seeking solutions.

"During that time, I played the role of a credible source, all while collecting enough information and planning a massive prank. Eventually, I discovered that the body Muggle inhabited following her transmigration belonged to a girl who believed in a evil deity of Inevitability. Furthermore, she realized that her family, including her father, mother, brothers, and sister, displayed odd behaviors. There were numerous unsettling details upon closer examination, enough to induce fear in anyone who delved too deep. So, she found an opportunity to escape from home.

"This situation bore a striking resemblance to a family I knew, with a female member who had mysteriously vanished.

“After careful comparisons, Loki, the family, and I confirmed that Muggle was indeed their missing relative. Then, one day, Loki provided the family’s modified Soul Summoning Spell and instructed me to find a way to sell it to Muggle for her use.

“Drawing on my understanding of Muggle’s psychological and emotional state, I meticulously crafted a persuasive argument. Leveraging her longing to return home and her habit of searching for clues, I convinced Mad Lady to sell the Soul Summoning Spell to her.

“As expected, she began to suffer from schizophrenia. In a sense, Roche Louise Sanson came back to life.

“In each subsequent treatment session, I made her appear better on the surface, but her condition deteriorated with each passing session. At times, I even guided Roche’s personality to emerge and engage with her. It was quite intriguing.”

Lumian listened in silence, refraining from interrupting I Know Someone’s account with anger. Franca, on the other hand, was seething with anger, repeatedly sipping water to calm herself.

Why are these people so detestable!

They didn’t regard others as real people at all!

After I Know Someone had finished speaking, Lumian inquired further.

“The Soul Summoning Spell comes from Roche Louise Sanson’s family?”

“That’s correct.” I Know Someone’s condition was akin to a windless lake. “They combined the knowledge obtained from a boon and a Warlock’s Soul Summoning Spell, giving rise to the Soul Summoning Spell that Muggle purchased. I’m not sure what makes it special; I’m not a scholar of witchcraft.”

Knowledge from a boon… Lumian quickly reviewed his knowledge of Dancer, Alms Monk, and Contractee within the Inevitability pathway, but he found nothing that could be connected to the Soul Summoning Spell.

He suspected that it might be a knowledge linked to a higher Sequence of the Inevitability pathway or perhaps a unique boon bestowed by the evil god known as Inevitability.

After a few moments of contemplation, Lumian asked slowly, “Does Roche Louise Sanson’s family know about Muggle’s existence and her condition? Are they aware of her true identity and her current location?”

I Know Someone nodded.

“I informed them of the first part, and Roche herself disclosed the rest. Later, they managed to establish contact with Muggle, bypassing both me and Loki.”

The Sinners is involved in spreading the Inevitability faith in Cordu and providing various resources… That's correct. The padre could have joined them immediately after leaving Cordu and become their so-called archbishop. This indirectly confirms it… Lumian's emotions remained subdued, but his mind was sharp.

He subconsciously clenched his fists and focused on I Know Someone.

"What are the names of the members of Roche Louise Sanson's family? Where are they currently residing? Are they affiliated with a secret organization or a cult?"

I Know Someone shook his head.

"After I moved into the asylum, I lost contact with them. During this period, I attempted to locate them but discovered that they had already relocated. It seemed they were no longer using their original identities, as if they were trying to hide from something.

"Roche's father's name is Voisin, her mother's name is Constace, her elder brother's name is Bliss, her elder sister's name is Annette, and her younger brother's name is Atur. They are all part of a branch of the Sanson family. However, I do not know their current names.

"Voisin was once a struggling merchant on the brink of bankruptcy, but he later joined a secret organization known as the Sinners. Miraculously, he escaped his financial woes and regained his success. He had numerous businesses, with the most notable being the Voisin Café, that doubled up as a hotel, restaurant, and various functions. It was frequented by high society, but before they relocated, these businesses were sold."

Lumian proceeded to gather more information about the Sinners and sought details about the appearance, mannerisms, and habits of each family member.

With the newly acquired information in hand, Lumian spoke thoughtfully, "Do you know what role the Sinners' demigod or Beyonder at a higher Sequence played in the Cordu disaster?"

I Know Someone replied,"Not long before I moved into the asylum, Voisin informed me that they were taken by surprise. This occurred much earlier than the agreed-upon time, so none of them had arrived at the scene.

"It appears that some individuals were overly eager to obtain the boons. The ensuing mishap resulting from their failure also caused them to lose many leads. Otherwise, they would have discovered you much earlier."

The Sufferer lurking in the shadows of Cordu and around me isn't the demigod of the Sinners, so who is interfering with my fate with Termiboros? Lumian frowned and asked, "Did Roche not inform the Sinners, her parents, or her siblings about the early ritual?"

“No,” I Know Someone replied succinctly. “They believe she wished to reduce the number of individuals receiving the boons and concentrate the power.”

Lumian fell into a contemplative silence, sensing that something was amiss.

Could the lizard-like elf be involved?

It had prevented Aurore from seeking Madame Hela’s help and Roche Louise Sanson from contacting the Sinners?

Lumian attempted to inquire further about this matter but did not receive additional information.

Wary of the truth serum’s effects wearing off, he decided to change the subject.

“What does the deity you believe in want you to do in Trier?”

I Know Someone’s vacant eyes remained fixed on the sofa as he responded, “He occasionally grants us revelations for us to decipher independently.

“If we interpret them correctly and complete the corresponding task, we receive something unexpected.

“Apart from these revelations, He rarely communicates with us directly. We can only pray to Him through a ritual, and this can be done no more than once a week.”

The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings and Mr. Fool’s state are very similar… Lumian was tempted to inquire about the revelations granted by the Celestial Worthy but decided it might be too risky to discuss.

After a brief moment of consideration and deliberation, he decided to approach it from another angle and indirectly inquire.

“Did you start the rumors about human blood bread?”

“Yes,” I Know Someone admitted without hesitation.

Lumian continued, “What about the rumor that Mandrake can treat illnesses?”

I Know Someone calmly replied, “I was the one behind that as well.

“It was a revelation from the Celestial Worthy. It was then that I realized I could influence events this way. After some time, rumors of human blood bread began to spread.”

The Mandrake rumor is a revelation from the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings? Will there be any hidden dangers in using it to suppress the spirituality surge? Lumian contemplated the idea of warning the naive Vampire, La Nou Bruch.

He circled around and inquired about other revelations about the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings. He didn't obtain much useful information, so he could only move on to the last topic.

"Tell me about Mad Lady, Ultraman, Hisoka, Loki, and Bard."

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Chapter 409 - 409 Fire Execution

409 Fire Execution

I Know Someone said calmly, “Mad Lady is probably a Traveler. I have no idea where she lives…

“Loki is a Sequence 5 Marionettist of the Seer pathway, but I suspect he wields more power from Celestial Worthy than us. He can access resources unknown to us. He even owns a mysterious ancient castle, Dylan, hidden somewhere…

“Bard is a Sequence 6 Prometheus of the Marauder pathway. Of course, I’m unsure of his current situation. We haven’t seen each other in reality for a long time… He did write Emperor Roselle’s Secret Chronicles and published it under someone else’s name…

“I’m not familiar with Hisoka. He hasn’t attended any real-life gatherings in the Northern Continent. In my opinion, he’s very dangerous, second only to Loki. He’s similar to Mad Lady…

“If I hadn’t gone crazy for a while, I would be a Sequence 5 by now…”

Castle Dylan… Lumian recalled Madame Hela’s description of Loki’s dream and suspected that the mysterious ancient castle hidden somewhere was where Loki had been resurrected.

He hadn’t expected Bard to be a Beyonder of the Marauder pathway. He believed that the nickname originated from the Ocean Songster of the Sailor pathway or the Midnight Poet of the Evernight pathway, but on second thought, it made sense. In rural stories, bards often moonlighted as thieves.

This also confirmed the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings’s influence on the Seer, Apprentice, and Marauder pathways. Half of the six core members belonged to these three pathways.

After I Know Someone finished speaking, Franca asked with concern, “Who else in the Research Society is involved with this?”

I Know Someone couldn’t resist keeping it a secret. He replied calmly, “I know Pettigrew is one…”

“Pettigrew?” Franca blurted out in surprise. “I thought he was making fun of his height with that nickname, but it turns out he’s mocking his identity?”

I Know Someone nodded gently.

“Before finding the organization and joining the Research Society, he already knew Loki. As you all know, Loki can use the Celestial Worthy’s power to sense transmigrators within a certain range, and Pettigrew is also in the Trier Greater Region.

“He first became Loki’s subordinate before joining the Research Society. He was assigned to another team. He actually nicknamed himself Pettigrew because he wanted to play a prank and reveal the truth. He mocked and fooled all the Research Society members who lacked insight, but in reality, I knew he was hesitating, feeling guilty, and struggling. He hoped to use this method to warn the other Research Society members that there was something wrong with him.

“My plan was to find an opportunity to tell him that Muggle, who never discriminated against his height and was gentle and amiable to him, was harmed by us. He could be considered an indirect helper. When the time comes, his devastation and pained expression would have been very interesting.”

“Dammit!” Franca cursed.

Although I Know Someone had been lobotomized and he had become very calm, his tone no longer mocking, his straightforward thoughts were still filled with vileness, making Franca unable to control her emotions.

“What else?” Lumian asked on her behalf.

I Know Someone recited five more aliases in a row before concluding, “These are the few I know. As for the ones Loki and the others secretly developed or didn’t tell me, I’m not sure.”

“There’s quite a few…” Franca was filled with hatred and frustration.

Franca exhaled and muttered, “Your sister’s adaptation of famous quotes is ridiculous…”

“Did you spread news of the impending apocalypse because you believed in the Celestial Worthy and rushed to pursue joy, allowing you to commit all sorts of evil deeds without feeling guilty? Or did you become desperate and believe in the Celestial Worthy because you were certain that the apocalypse was about to arrive and humans couldn’t resist?”

I Know Someone replied,”Both. Some tried to replicate their pre-transmigration actions and immediately gained the Celestial Worthy’s attention, while others faced catastrophes and learned about the apocalypse. They only believed in the Celestial Worthy after their mental breakdown.”

At this point, I Know Someone’s empty eye sockets turned to Franca, who had just asked the question.

“Later, the Celestial Worthy even gave us some revelations, allowing us to guess a portion of the truth, including…”

For some inexplicable reason, Lumian suddenly felt a strong sense of danger and interrupted I Know Someone's statement.

"You don't have to continue!"

I Know Someone immediately closed his mouth.

"Why can't he say it?" Franca eagerly awaited the answer, but there was no response.

Lumian recalled concepts like the "barrier" related to the apocalypse and said seriously, "It's not suitable for you to know the truth about the apocalypse yet. That knowledge might cause you to lose control or be fatally corrupted on the spot. You can inquire about it when you become a demigod."

"Alright." Franca glanced at Lumian and muttered, "Why do you act like you know the truth…"

Why can he do it, but I can't?

"I only know a little," Lumian replied candidly. "And that knowledge brought me danger. It's all thanks to Mr. Fool's seal."

As the effects of the truth serum wore off, I Know Someone returned to his usual unchanging calm. Even his willingness to answer questions had vanished.

Franca gazed at the lobotomized Psychiatrist for a few seconds before sighing.

"Sometimes, we're still too naive. We might even think of ourselves as the protagonist."

Lumian knew that "we" referred to the members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.

Franca averted her gaze and turned to Lumian.

"While the sheep was undergoing the operation, I searched both I Know Someone's and his substitute's wards. I found some papers at the latter's place. I didn't read the content carefully, but it felt a little esoteric."

As she spoke, she rose and returned to her room, retrieving a thin stack of papers.

Lumian flipped through them and frowned.

"Midoro's Worship…"

"What's this?" Franca hadn't heard the first half of the interrogation.

Lumian explained briefly and concluded, "This should be a spell that allows one to traverse the Formless Door and closely align with an evil god, gaining

knowledge and experience. Even ordinary people should be able to learn it after receiving proper guidance."

Lumian put away the secret deed spell, Midoro's Worship. Although he didn't know how to use it, nor did he need to, he could still grasp the corresponding knowledge. This would help him deal with the heretics who relied on Midoro's Worship to obtain knowledge and strength.

He then said to Franca, "Relay this information to Madame Hela. I'll handle I Know Someone."

"Alright." Franca nodded gently and watched as Lumian put on the Lie earring and walked to the armchair. He grabbed the calm man's shoulder and instantly vanished.

…

Prison district, Rois Comprehensive Execution Ground.

It was not yet 7 a.m., and there was no one here. It was wet, as if isolated from the world.

Lumian emerged from the void with I Know Someone and tied the April Fool's core member to the stake.

Then, he retreated a long distance, crouched down, and pressed his hands to the ground.

Two crimson tongues of fire swiftly darted towards I Know Someone's body along the weed-covered ground.

They grew larger and larger until they transformed into a giant serpent, engulfing I Know Someone completely.

Lumian stood up and used his feet to maintain the flow of flames. He silently watched as the calm Psychiatrist revealed grayish-white Dragon Scales under the stress.

His body subconsciously struggled, but it wasn't as intense. His various Beyonder powers scattered in all directions, but they failed to affect Lumian who stood beyond their range.

Lumian condensed a dangerous flaming spear and hurled it, piercing and burning a hole around I Know Someone's chest and abdomen.

The crimson flames that hadn't incinerated the Dragon Scales elsewhere surged into I Know Someone's body.

As Lumian watched the April Fool's core member truly begin to burn, his body instinctively emitting pained cries, his thoughts raced. He quickly recalled the battle last night and today's interrogation.

He had learned a lot from this, but he couldn't quite grasp the acting principle.

Flames aren't just lethal; they can also be used as deterrence, intimidation, and a signal…

It is necessary for Pyromaniacs to combine their flames with traps…

…

As the raging flames engulfed I Know Someone, Lumian felt as if a fire was burning in his heart.

It was anger, satisfaction, and catharsis.

At that moment, Lumian's Pyromaniac potion digested a little more, just as it had after the battle the previous night.

After an unknown period of time, in the uninhabited execution ground, I Know Someone ceased his struggles and lost his breath. His body was charred as it cracked apart.

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Chapter 410 - 410 A Leisure Week

410 A Leisure Week

In the drizzling execution ground, Lumian watched as the crimson flames gradually dwindled before his eyes. He observed as translucent, colorless mucus seeped out of the corpse. It surrounded the charred and cracked I Know Someone, attempting to burrow into his head through the empty eye sockets and fuse with some organ.

Rumble!

I Know Someone's head exploded from the inside out, splattering grayish-white colloids everywhere.

The transparent, colorless mucus had lost its binding substance, leaving it only able to condense independently, eventually forming a sticky colloid.

This colloid landed beneath the stake. From a distance, it resembled an unfixed mirror, capable of reflecting everything around it.

Lumian strode over and retrieved the colorless colloid, which was likely a Hypnotist Beyonder characteristic. He did this amidst the scorching air and the flames that flowed around him.

As he gazed upon it, he noticed minuscule transparent bubbles deep within the colloid. They caught and refracted sunlight from various angles, displaying an array of colors.

After storing away the Beyonder characteristic, Lumian turned on his heel and departed from the stake.

Behind him, the lingering flames continued their relentless assault, devouring the charred corpse.

As the light flickered, Lumian's figure vanished from the Rois Comprehensive Execution Ground.

…

In Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, in the market district.

Lumian, who had reverted to his original form with the Lie earring, rubbed his temples and turned to Franca.

“It’s already taken care of. It’s fitting for someone like him to meet his end at the stake.”

“Unfortunately, he’s a believer in the Celestial Worthy. Even if he doesn’t take action, he remains a hidden threat—a potential time bomb. Otherwise, I would have spared him, albeit with his frontal lobe removed and his sight forever gone.”

Franca breathed a sigh of relief. “That’s reassuring.”

In truth, she felt a twinge of regret. If not for the insanity that had gripped I Know Someone in the past and his faith in the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings, who was suspected of triggering their transmigration, she might have attempted to channel his spirit and inquire about the potion formula for the Spectator pathway, from Sequence 9 down to Sequence 6 or even Sequence 5. However, after thorough contemplation, she decided to forsake this perilous scheme.

Lumian’s gaze shifted to the open door of the guest bedroom.

“Where’s Jenna?”

“She’s gone to the Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons,” Franca taunted Lumian. “She’s much more diligent than you in digesting the potion.”

Lumian replied thoughtfully, “After venting the flames within me to battle and carry out the execution, my Pyromaniac potion has significantly digested. At this rate, if I can distill a new acting principle, it should be fully digested within two months.”

“No problem,” Franca replied without hesitation. “The Beyonder characteristics of these followers of the evil god have eluded the grasp of high-ranking individuals. I wouldn’t dare to possess them myself. There’s no need to think about repaying me. Dealing with I Know Someone is also a mandate from the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.”

“Where are you off to?” Lumian asked casually.

Franca responded with a hint of annoyance, “I’ve been caught up in all sorts of messes you’ve stirred up lately, and I haven’t had a moment to pleasure myself. Now that it’s finally settled, it’s only fair that I take a break, right? I suggest you behave yourself for the next few days!”

Lumian couldn’t help but smile as the Demoness of Pleasure slipped on her boots, swung the door open, and left.

Once the door slammed shut, Lumian, who had originally planned to return to Auberge du Coq Doré to write to Madam Magician, grabbed a pen and paper from the nearby table. He meticulously jotted down all the information I Know Someone had given him.

He then neatly folded the paper and placed I Know Someone's Hypnotist Beyonder characteristic on top of it.

Summoning the "doll" messenger, Lumian patiently waited.

Before long, the "doll" messenger returned, carrying the translucent colloid and a square piece of folded paper.

Madam Magician's reply read:

"This is a shared mission of the Tarot Club. There's no need for a reward. Keep it for yourself. I've already removed the corruption that could be removed.

"We'll mobilize various resources to search for the whereabouts of the remaining five April Fool's members, but we currently lack a solid lead. The pranks mentioned in the information have been ongoing for too long."

Lumian finished reading in silence, allowing the crimson flames to consume the paper in his hand.

He longed to teleport directly to Feynapotter's Gaia Province and the Southern Continent's West Balam to personally hunt down the suspicious April Fool's team members, such as Bard. However, he knew it was futile. Without sufficient information or clues, it was like searching for a needle in a haystack.

He couldn't rely on the ice-cream-eating boy's luck every time, could he?

All I can do now is wait for the Tarot Club to uncover useful leads… The only person I can track down at the moment is the publisher of the underground book, Emperor Roselle's Secret Chronicles. If only they had met with the real author, Bard… Lumian felt a mixture of disappointment and relief.

He planned to take his time with the Hypnotist Beyonder characteristic. While he searched for a suitable Artisan, he waited for Anthony Reid to investigate General Philip's widow.

If the Psychiatrist gained something and succeeded in curing his psychological issues, Lumian wouldn't mind selling him the Hypnotist Beyonder characteristics and splitting the proceeds with Franca.

If Lumian found a suitable Artisan before that, he would designate the mystical item he crafted as a common resource, allowing Franca, Jenna, and the others to use it as they saw fit.

After tucking away the Hypnotist Beyonder characteristic in a concealed pocket, Lumian exhaled and leaned back in his dining chair.

Only then did he hear the growl of his stomach and realize his hunger.

Since waking up at 6 a.m., he had been engrossed in the interrogation, execution, and letter writing, completely forgetting about breakfast.

Honestly, leaving me alone here; it's as if I live here… Lumian mumbled to himself as he got up and ventured into the apartment's kitchen to see what ingredients were available.

Scanning the area, he spotted a few potatoes.

Following the process, he ignited the stove, heated a pan, added oil, sautéed, and tossed in the shredded potatoes. He seasoned the dish accordingly.

Once it was ready, Lumian toasted two slices of bread and poured a glass of milk.

Sitting down at the dining table, he sandwiched the crispy shredded potatoes between the slices of toast and savored them, occasionally taking a sip of milk.

Outside the window, the drizzle had cleared, and the sun beamed brightly.

…

During the following week, Lumian made the most of his time. He patiently awaited the recovery of his mental damage from the past two battles, taking the opportunity to act as a Pyromaniac and gradually digest the potion.

In the midst of this process, he also managed to report to Mr. K about his recent activities and the discovery of the evil god organization.

Members of the Savoie Mob in Salle de Bal Brise were surprised. Their boss had unexpectedly appeared for five to six consecutive days and had stayed for extended periods each time. Compared to their previous experiences of him being unavailable, it was as if he had found a double.

Charlie was equally astounded. Ciel frequented the basement bar every night to drink, tease, and taunt people, making him the prime target of this unusual dedication.

Just as Franca was about to revisit Trocadéro's Red House café and discreetly remind Browns Sauron not to forget auditing her, Hela's pure silver skull sent out a notice of a special gathering to Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches and Lumian's abandoned safe house on Rue des Blouses Blanches.

It had been a while since Lumian had visited the safe house. If Franca hadn't inquired about the letter upon receiving it, he might not have been aware of it.

Many members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society operated in a similar fashion. They had designated locations for receiving and sending letters but did not actually reside there. They only visited periodically to avoid detection by Hela,

finding comfort in these small details.

Lumian arrived at the abandoned safe house on Rue des Blouses Blanches and carefully unfolded the letter. Its contents read:

“Muggle:

“There’s a special gathering scheduled for 10 tonight. We need to discuss something of utmost importance that concerns everyone’s safety.”

…

At night, just three minutes shy of ten o’clock, Lumian recited the incantation imbued with Concealment powers within the confines of the safe house on Rue du Rossignol.

Gradually, he felt himself sinking into a profound slumber, the sensation akin to his body being erased by an enormous eraser.

After an indeterminate period, he suddenly regained consciousness and found himself standing amidst an ancient palace enveloped in the misty shroud of a town.

Over a hundred members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society had already assembled, their figures still taking shape.

Navigating through what resembled a grand masquerade ball venue, Lumian, now transformed into Aurore using Lie, wore a Warlock’s black robe and half-mask as he approached the Academy team.

He scanned the area but didn’t spot the member known as Pettigrew.

Standing beside a slender man with a brownish-yellow manila document bag obscuring his head was Professor, adorned in a black butterfly mask, a bow tie shirt, and a long dark coat.

It was her husband, Associate Professor.

Professor regarded Lumian with curiosity and inquired, “Do you know what’s happening? Why did they convene this special gathering?”

Lumian, taking on the persona of “Muggle” Aurore, smirked and let out a sigh.

“Because we have traitors among us.”

“Traitors…” Professor and the other members of the Academy team echoed the term.

At that moment, the half-giant president, Gandalf, attired in a simple robe and hood, and the vice president, Hela, who appeared as a black widow with her face

concealed by a veil, made their way to the massive stone throne situated deep within the ancient palace.

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Chapter 411 - 411 Review Committee

411 Review Committee

The notice had already made it clear that this was no ordinary gathering. Most members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society didn't split into groups to chat. Instead, they took their customary positions and fixed their eyes on the massive mottled stone chair.

"We've got a bunch of traitors among us!"

A bunch of traitors… Even though Professor and the others from the Academy had received Lumian's hint, they hadn't expected the issue to be this severe.

It wasn't just one traitor; it was a whole bunch!

The ancient palace, though dilapidated, exploded with commotion. Some members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society were skeptical, while others became instantly wary, suspicious of everyone around. Some thought there might be a problem, but they didn't think it was as bad as Gandalf made it out to be.

As they whispered amongst themselves, Hela, her face shrouded in black, spoke with an icy tone, "First, let's have one of the victims share her experience."

Her voice wasn't loud, but it cut through the silence of the night, reaching every member of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.

She then turned her gaze toward the area where the Academy team was positioned.

Understanding Hela's intent, Lumian confidently ascended the steps and stood next to the massive, ancient mottled stone chair.

He channeled Aurore's emotional reaction if she were to discover the truth about her death and spoke with a deep, resonant voice, "On April 1st, I acquired a spell known as the Soul Summoning Spell from Mad Lady of the April Fool's team…"

Without any need for amplification, Lumian's imitation of Aurore's voice harnessed the Concealed power that saturated the Nation of the Evernight, ensuring that everyone present could hear without any leaks.

It was evident that Hela had lent her assistance. Lumian, not being a true Warlock, couldn't employ supplementary spells himself.

Upon hearing this revelation, most members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society shifted their attention to the palace's crevice housing the April

Fool's team. They noticed the conspicuous absence of Mad Lady and a significant number of her team members.

They could now infer which group the traitors were affiliated with. Those who had been pranked by the April Fool's team couldn't help but feel a sense of vindication.

Lumian continued with his account. He didn't immediately divulge Loki and I Know Someone's "confessions." Instead, he reconstructed Aurore's emotions.

The trust in I Know Someone, the yearning for home, the obsession with clues, the fascination with Mad Lady's claims, the fear and unease upon discovering a soul fragment fused with her memories after using the Soul Summoning Spell and the subsequent split into a separate personality, the desperate search for treatment from I Know Someone, the helplessness and horror from her repeated improvements before repeated deterioration…

Lumian's agitation grew as he spoke. At times, he even choked back a sob.

Part of this stemmed from his frustration. He had failed to notice Aurore's abnormal emotions and state earlier. His relaxed demeanor around those close to him had caused him to overlook subtle changes. By the time he had realized the gravity of the situation, it had already spiraled out of control.

Simultaneously, as he recounted and simulated Aurore, her fragmented soul seemed to stir and hover near the edge of the seal, exerting an influence on his own psyche.

As he neared the end of his narrative, Lumian took a deep breath.

"I came perilously close to death because of it. Fortunately, I received assistance at the eleventh hour and managed to seal my split personality. That's why I was absent from the gatherings for almost half a year.

Hela took charge of the conversation.

As Hela noticed the growing fear and concern among the members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, she recounted Loki's mockery of Muggle and I Know Someone's intricate schemes.

This revelation stoked the flames of fury within most of the Research Society's members, and they began to grasp the reasons behind Muggle and Hela's actions.

Hela surveyed the assembled crowd and continued, "Muggle wasn't the sole victim of their malevolence. Many members who had previously met untimely ends or disappeared were also targeted.

"Now, let's invite a few witnesses up."

With that, several witnesses, including Black Earth and other April Fool's team members, took the stage one by one to share what they knew. Their accounts sent

shivers down the spines of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society members, leaving them with a lingering fear.

It became abundantly clear that if Muggle hadn't survived and exposed their true colors, countless more individuals could have fallen prey to their schemes!

After the witnesses had concluded their accounts, President Gandalf presented the evidence, including diaries and items. Finally, he addressed the assembly, "According to I Know Someone's confession, we've managed to eliminate Loki's accomplices who were embedded in other teams. Among them, Pettigrew took his own life, overwhelmed by guilt. He was a good person but lacked determination and courage. If he had reached out to Hela and me earlier and hinted at the situation more effectively, many unfortunate events might have been averted. He wouldn't have had to carry this heavy burden."

As sighs rippled through the audience, Gandalf's resonant voice grew stronger.

"Everyone, we've only dealt with those accomplices known to I Know Someone. It's entirely possible that there are still spies embedded in various teams, loyal only to Loki. I propose the formation of a Review Committee consisting of Hela, myself, and three other trusted companions who have already undergone mutual reviews. Our mission will be to assess the remaining members and root out any hidden threats. We'll take decisive action against Loki and his allies."

Members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society hesitated, concerned that this move would expose their secrets and realities to the Review Committee.

If any ambitious individuals were part of this committee, they could potentially exploit the information to manipulate and control members, posing a more significant threat than Loki's gang.

Gandalf remained observant, waiting for their deliberations before adding, "Do not be overly concerned. Our review process won't delve into your personal secrets or true identities. The primary goal is for the Review Committee to draft a stringent contract that ensures Research Society members won't harm each other. Everyone will sign it, and the contract will be notarized by Apollo. We don't care which deity you believe in, your real-world profession, or your hidden secrets. As long as you pose no threat and don't become hidden time bombs, you will be fine. This limitation will be clearly outlined in the contract."

Apollo, one of the five vice presidents, was known by a different nickname before. However, one day, he had unexpectedly approached the massive stone chair and announced his new moniker.

He had already successfully passed Gandalf and Hela's scrutiny.

In comparison to a comprehensive body-to-soul review, signing a binding contract to ensure each other's safety seemed far more acceptable to the members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.

After a show of hands, the Review Committee was officially established with nearly unanimous support.

The committee comprised five members: President Gandalf, Vice President Hela, Vice President Apollo, Hidden Blade from the Sanctuary team, and Headmaster from the Academy team.

Hela had initially suggested that Muggle join the Review Committee, but Lumian felt that, given that he wasn't truly Muggle, it wouldn't be appropriate for him to hold such a position. Thus, he rejected Hela's proposal.

As the vote passed, Lumian overheard Hidden Blade Franca mutter, "Humans are still the same. If you want to open a window, there will always be plenty of objections. But if you propose to tear down the roof, they'll happily agree to let you open the window."

Upon noticing Muggle's gaze, Hidden Blade Franca added, "I didn't say that."

Subsequently, the members split into groups to discuss the terms of the contract. Their aim was to ensure that it contained no extraneous content and that it could effectively expose traitors and harmful actions without any loopholes.

As Lumian descended the steps, he noticed Hidden Blade Franca engaged in conversation with a tall individual wearing a lion headgear.

"Muggle, you're in the market district too?"

"007, why do you say that?" Franca asked with deliberate curiosity.

That 007 who's affiliated with an official faction in Trier… Lumian nodded and smirked.

"Just because you're active in the market district doesn't necessarily mean you live there."

"That's true," 007 replied, then turned to Hidden Blade with a hint of jest in his voice, "You've already told me about that terrifying aura that night, and today you mentioned Loki and the others' betrayal. It would have been strange if I couldn't connect the dots and figure out that it was Madame Hela, you, and Muggle dealing with Loki and I Know Someone in the market district. Besides, I heard about a Marionettist going missing from Bureau 8 during that time, and it matched the abilities Loki displayed."

At this point, 007 looked at Hidden Blade and Muggle in puzzlement.

"None of you are Beyonders of the Hunter pathway."

The higher-ups suspected that the terrifying aura had been emitted by a high-level Beyonder of the Hunter pathway.

“Can we create that terrifying aura ourselves? It must be exogenous!” Franca was telling the truth, but she was deliberately misleading him into thinking about charms, Sealed Artifacts, and so on.

As 007 nodded slowly in contemplation, Lumian focused on him and inquired, “What’s the official stance of Bureau 8 regarding the missing Marionettist? Why do they believe he disappeared?”

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Chapter 412 - 412 Purge

412 Purge

Wearing a lion headgear, 007 took a moment to think before speaking.

“I’ve only heard rumors that the Marionettist disappeared with some classified information.”

“That’s not true,” Franca replied, dropping the act. 007 had already figured out that the truth of that night involved the two of them teaming up with Hela to deal with Loki.

Loki didn’t possess any such information!

007 didn’t argue with her and continued discussing the rumors.

“And the classified information seems to be tied to a treasure left behind by a secret organization.”

Left-behind treasure… Lumian and Franca both remembered the Castle Dylan mentioned by I Know Someone.

The location of this mysterious castle remained unknown, and Loki’s dreams featured a towering and ominous ancient castle.

007 continued, “There are also members of Bureau 8 who suspect that the terrifying aura from that night is connected to the missing Marionettist. An intelligence supervisor named Antoine has been repeatedly asking for more details.”

Antoine… He believes Loki’s disappearance wasn’t random, and something must have happened to him? Lumian made a mental note of the name.

After recounting the rumors, 007 glanced at Muggle and said half-jokingly, “It’s best if you avoid the market district. Hidden Blade has stirred up trouble there. It’s very dangerous.”

“Who said that? Security has clearly improved!” Franca responded confidently.

Ever since she and Lumian had taken down the leaders of the Poison Spur Mob, the Savoie Mob had taken control of the entire market district. The frequency of mob fights, shootings, and killings had decreased significantly, and security had improved.

007 sighed and remarked, “That’s only on the surface. There are more incidents involving supernatural powers than before.”

“Sigh, I wonder when I’ll get a long vacation.”

Lumian, in the role of Muggle, conversed with 007 for a while before returning to the Academy team.

Professor, wearing a black butterfly mask, approached him and let out a soft sigh.

“I was worried that something had happened to you due to the Hidden Sage’s whispers, and you needed some time to recover. Who would have thought that Loki’s gang was behind it?”

After cursing Loki and his gang, she turned to Muggle for confirmation.

“Have you noticed that the Hidden Sage’s whispers have taken on a disturbing change in recent months?”

Aurore’s grimoires didn’t contain any records of this… Lumian thought for a moment and replied with a hint of bitterness, “Nothing much. As you know, I was affected by the Soul Summoning Spell in the first few months of this year. My mental state was unstable, and recently, I’ve sealed a part of my personality. The issues with my body haven’t been fully resolved. I had already digested the Warlock potion and was planning to gather ingredients for advancement, but I haven’t dared to do so now.”

The professor understood and cautioned, “You should be careful. Until your mental problems are completely resolved, and you return to your normal state, don’t consider consuming the potion.”

Her voice lowered as she continued, “I’ve noticed that the Hidden Sage’s whispers have been revealing more living knowledge lately. It’s the kind of knowledge that actively seeks out individuals and insists on entering their minds. This makes it even more dangerous for Beyonders of the Mystery Pryer pathway like us.”

More knowledge actively pursuing individuals… Has the Hidden Sage’s nature changed? Lumian had heard his sister Aurore mention the Knowledge Pursuer, so he didn’t appear confused or bewildered.

He nodded solemnly and said, “I’ll be cautious.”

Professor didn’t press further and continued discussing the specifics of the contract with Associate Professor and the other Academy team members. “Muggle” Lumian also took part in the conversation.

It took more than half an hour for the teams to gather their members’ opinions, document them, and submit them to the Review Committee.

After careful consolidation, adoption, and rejection by Gandalf, Hela, and others, along with collective discussions involving all members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, the terms of the contract were painstakingly finalized.

It wasn't clear if everyone tacitly agreed to enter the Nation of the Evernight, but the gathering included transmigrators. There was no requirement for members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society to be of the same kind or come from the same world. Hela was aware of this but chose not to bring it up. This allowed Lumian to fully meet the conditions and willingly comply with the contract's restrictions. He wouldn't secretly investigate the backgrounds of the Research Society members and wouldn't intentionally harm one another.

However, there were certain exceptions. The contract granted the Review Committee the right to investigate suspected members, but they couldn't pass judgment or make decisions unilaterally. They had to convene a special gathering and inform all members of the situation. Every member would then vote on guilt and suggest a rough range of punishment.

Loki and the others, who were currently being pursued, were no longer protected. Anyone had the authority to apprehend them.

After the contract was approved, Hidden Blade Franca, who stood beside Lumian, let out a sigh of relief and genuinely commented, "Once everyone signs the contract, the Research Society will truly become a secret organization.

"It was too lax before. Many matters relied on everyone's self-awareness."

Lumian, showing only the lower half of Aurore's face, smiled and replied, "After all, you all didn't come together for anything significant before. You lacked a strict hierarchy. It's only natural that you had the freedom to do as you pleased."

A loosely organized group could only mature gradually after weathering various challenges.

As Vice President Apollo drafted an extensive mystical contract, the various teams resumed their daily discussions.

This time, the primary focus of each team was on Loki and his companions' actions and potential accomplices.

Gandalf, Headmaster, Hela, Hidden Blade, and others moved from team to team, observing each member's reactions closely.

Suddenly, the Research Society member disguised as a horse, began reciting the incantation to leave the Nation of the Evernight before the Review Committee could patrol his area.

"A Beyonder from ancient times, the ruler of the Nation of the Evernight, the noble Mother of Heaven…"

The voice echoed through the ancient palace, but before the figure could finish the incantation, his eyes closed, and he fell asleep.

The surrounding members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society were momentarily shocked before realizing the situation.

They cursed, “Traitor!”

This individual had been one of Loki’s hidden accomplices.

With the mole incapacitated, the Review Committee resumed their patrol.

Fifteen minutes later, the contract, as large as two dining tables, was produced, bearing the signature of a Notary.

Exhausted, Vice President Apollo drank a potion provided by Gandalf to alleviate his mental fatigue.

In the following period, members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society ascended the steps one by one. Under the watchful eyes of the Review Committee, they read the contract and signed it using the nicknames they had been using for years.

During this process, the fog outside the ancient palace grew denser, as if preventing any external interference.

Once all the members had signed, three more traitors were exposed.

One of them transformed into a torch of light after signing, while another attempted to abduct his companion next to him, only to fall into a deep slumber. Seeing this, the third traitor chose to confess.

After a vote, the one who confessed was handled by a Hypnotist to erase relevant memories. He was expelled from the Research Society, while the remaining three turned into Beyonder characteristics.

Hela concluded, “Gandalf and I will investigate the family situations of these members. If they are ordinary people and there are no issues, I suggest auctioning off the Beyonder characteristics for money and providing compensation.”

This compensation wasn’t a reward for their wrongdoings but rather a way to assist the relatives of the members who had taken over the bodies and could no longer provide support.

Many members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society had transmigrated to this world five to six years ago. Some had wives and children. Upon hearing this proposal, they were moved and felt it wouldn’t be fair to implicate their families.

Lumian had no objections. He still considered himself an outsider in this situation.

In the remaining time, Lumian visited various teams, following Hidden Blade Franca's guidance, and identified two Artisans capable of crafting mystical items.

He didn't rush to interact with the Artisans and entrust them with the Hypnotist Beyonder characteristic from I Know Someone. Instead, he planned to wait for Anthony Reid.

The assistance a Hypnotist could provide far exceeded that of a corresponding mystical item. After all, most mystical items couldn't speak or offer advice and guidance.

Due to Loki's incident and the exposure of hidden traitors, many members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society lost their enthusiasm and chose to depart without lingering, causing the number of people in the ancient palace to dwindle.

The Professor and Associate Professor couple, who had initially intended to organize an Academy team gathering in Trier, temporarily abandoned the idea.

…

At noon the following day, Lumian casually arrived at Salle de Bal Brise with a Rouen meatloaf in hand.

Upon entering the café on the second floor, he spotted "Rat" Christo.

The short smuggling leader, sporting a pair of rat-like whiskers, greeted him with a smile.

Lumian raised his eyebrows and asked with a smile, "Got into trouble?"

Simultaneously, he thought to himself, This guy is a Sequence 8 Beast Tamer. Beyond that is Sequence 7 Vampire. With his current appearance, I wonder how the potion will increase his charm and height?

Christo chuckled and said, "There's something I want to ask you. I can't make up my mind."

Lumian pulled up a chair and sat down.

"And what's the matter?"

Christo, resembling a large rat, glanced around and said, "The Trier Cave Association invited me to join them. Why do you think they're interested in recruiting me?"

The Trier Cave Association was a group of individuals passionate about exploring and studying caves. Over time, it expanded its scope to include mining and drew in mine owners as well.

In Trier, the region with the most caves was underground.

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Chapter 413 - 413 Cave Association

413 Cave Association

Upon hearing the name Trier Cave Association and their invitation to “Rat” Christo, Lumian didn’t feel puzzled initially. Instead, he recalled the secret map of Underground Trier he had once seen from Gardner Martin.

Now, Lumian suspected that it might have been leaked from the Trier Cave Association.

This seemingly civilian organization had a large number of cave researchers. Some of them were employees of the municipal department or expert consultants. They had ample opportunities to come into contact with confidential exploration and construction information. There was no lack of people who had participated in the municipal modification decades ago. They were hands-on witnesses who had bored through various tunnels and reinforced all the quarry caves.

They had a deep understanding of Underground Trier.

Lumian looked at “Rat” Christo and asked thoughtfully, “Do you really not understand why they invited you to join the association?”

“Rat” Christo smiled sheepishly and said, “I have a guess, but I’m not sure.

“Ciel, don’t tell me they’ve discovered I’m a smuggler leader?”

As a merchant who had long exploited Underground Trier’s concealed nature to smuggle alcohol, weapons, and ammunition, Christo’s knowledge of different tunnels, remote mines, underground tombs, and hidden chambers rivaled that of most members of the Cave Association. He even possessed secret routes that remained unknown to others.

Moreover, his nickname was “Rat,” and he was a true Beast Tamer. With the help of his animal friends, his “tentacles” could extend to many areas that humans couldn’t reach.

Christo suspected that the Cave Association had taken a liking to him because of these traits.

That was why he felt uneasy. Whether it was his status as a Beast Tamer in the Beyonder domain or his nature as a big-time smuggler, they were enough to send him to trial. His options would probably range from hanging, a firing squad, incineration, beheading, to becoming a low-level experimentalist.

Lumian chuckled.

“I don’t believe that adventurers who join the Cave Association haven’t been involved in smuggling and don’t have Beyonders among them.”

“That’s right,” “Rat” Christo exhaled and said, “The Cave Association wants some business from me?”

Lumian glanced at him and said, “That’s why you should consult the Boss about this, not me.”

Christo lowered his voice and smiled ingratiatingly. “I’m just worried that the Boss will take the opportunity to assign me some dangerous mission.”

Based on Gardner Martin’s previous missions and the confidential map, this “Rat” keenly sensed the Boss’s extraordinary interest in Underground Trier.

He felt that if he joined the Trier Cave Association, Gardner Martin might arrange for him to contact some members of the association and attempt to steal confidential information or participate in research and risky expeditions.

And that often meant danger.

He had consulted Lumian not only because he felt that his colleague was powerful, knowledgeable, and quick-witted but also because he wanted to find someone to shirk his responsibility in advance.

He had already made up his mind to join the Trier Cave Association and keep it a secret from Gardner Martin, the boss of the Savoie Mob.

Previously, he had fawned over Lumian, displaying a certain degree of submission. His words were filled with praise for Lumian because he valued his colleague’s rapid advancement in Sequence, his strength, and his intelligence. If he befriended him, he might be able to save his life from a dangerous mission given by Gardner Martin at a critical moment.

Gardner Martin definitely couldn’t know about this, but if he accidentally discovered the matter, Christo could naturally blame it on Ciel:

I, ‘Rat,’ am a boorish and uncultured individual. I spend my days dealing with animals, laborers, and the dark underground. I have limited knowledge and ain’t very bright. I often seek guidance from Ciel when I encounter matters, and he told me that I could join the Cave Association. He said it was a very normal and personal matter.

Lumian looked at Christo with a faint smile, his dark-blue eyes and grayish-black hair, and didn’t respond to his inquiry. Instead, he asked, “You’ve been a Beast Tamer for a long time, right? Do you know what the next Sequence is?”

Judging by Rat's care and concern for his animal companions, even if he didn't know the acting method, the Beast Tamer potion should have mostly been digested.

"I don't know. The Boss didn't tell me," Christo's eyes darted around.

Lumian chuckled and said, "As far as I know, the next Sequence of Beast Tamer is a qualitative change. It will bring you an all-around improvement, including a longer lifespan and a body with better recovery traits."

Without waiting for Christo to press further, Lumian changed the subject.

"Therefore, you must work hard to complete the mission given by the Boss and strive to obtain the corresponding rewards as soon as possible."

"Yes, yes, yes," Christo hastily agreed.

Only then did Lumian steer the conversation back on track. He smiled and asked, "Do you wish to join the Trier Cave Association?"

Christo stammered, "I-I'm curious about their motives. Moreover, the person who came seems polite and keeps smiling, but I keep feeling that his actions are a threat to me. Yes, a threat!

"The one following him is even more expressionless. He looks at me as if I'm a dead man, a criminal awaiting trial!"

Curious… Lumian chuckled inwardly, grasping Rat's inclination and thoughts.

"Angrily," he said, "How dare they threaten a leader of our Savoie Mob? We must inform the Boss about this!"

"No, no need!" Christo panicked. "The Cave Association is a semi-official organization. We're just mobsters. There's no need to clash with them. This won't do you, me, or Red Boots, who are members of the Savoie Mob in the market district, any good."

Lumian clicked his tongue silently, planning to add fuel to the fire and force the truth out of "Rat."

At that moment, Sarkota, who had been guarding the staircase at the bottom, walked up and said to Lumian, "Boss, two individuals calling themselves Trier Cave Association liaisons are here to pay you a visit."

Visit me? Someone from the Trier Cave Association is visiting me? Lumian glanced at "Rat" Christo, who had his hands on the table in surprise and confusion. He leaned back in his chair and said to Sarkota, "Invite them up."

The Trier Cave Association's two liaisons were young. They wore black formal attire and blue bow ties. One had brown hair, brown eyes, and a reserved smile.

The other had black hair and brown eyes, expressionless and cold.

The friendly liaison glanced at “Rat” Christo and fixed his gaze on Lumian’s face.

He smiled and asked, “Good afternoon. Are you Monsieur Ciel Dubois?”

“Yes.” Lumian wanted to see what the Trier Cave Association was up to.

Lumian didn’t hide his emotions and asked with amusement, “What do I have that caught your Cave Association’s eye?”

I’m not a smuggler who frequents Underground Trier!

Could it be that you know that I entered the fourth level of the catacombs and obtained the Samaritan Women’s Spring water?

Could it be that you still know that I’m a member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order and am aware of a series of hidden catacombs like the Albert Mines?

Joseph replied with a smile, “We have our reasons. If you’re willing to join our association, you’ll definitely know the specific reason.”

Rayan, who was taller than Joseph, added coldly, “That’s a good thing for you.”

Lumian gazed at them for a few seconds before chuckling.

“I’m not interested in your association.”

The expressionless Rayan narrowed his eyes.

“I hope you won’t regret it.”

Joseph smiled meaningfully and said, “You might not know the significance of our Cave Association in Trier.

“Unfortunately, you missed this opportunity.”

With that, the two of them turned around and prepared to walk towards the stairs leading to the ground floor.

As Lumian watched them leave, he raised his head slightly.

What is the Trier Cave Association up to? This matter is definitely not simple…

Perhaps this is an opportunity. If I offend the Cave Association, Gardner Martin probably won’t let me stay in the market district anymore…

My current mission in the Iron and Blood Cross Order is to investigate the Sauron family’s decline and explore the underground to find the entrance to Fourth Epoch Trier. It has nothing to do with staying in the market district…

Once I leave the market district, I'll be out of Loki's sight. I can slip into the shadows and wait patiently…

I wonder if I can continue enjoying Salle de Bal Brise's share of profits…

If anything goes awry, I'll teleport away immediately…

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian suddenly knocked on the coffee table in front of him.

Amidst the thumping sounds, he glanced at Joseph and Rayan's figures and asked calmly, "Who gave you the permission to leave?"

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Chapter 414 - 414 Reason

414 Reason

Joseph and Rayan came to a sudden halt, swiftly turning to face Lumian.

Lumian observed them in silence, offering no immediate explanation.

Joseph, maintaining his smug and condescending grin, inquired, “Monsieur Ciel, I’m not sure I comprehend your meaning.”

Lumian spoke with composure, “I granted you permission to visit me, not the freedom to depart.”

“This is my Salle de Bal Brise, not your home. You can’t come and go as you please.”

Though Lumian didn’t intentionally use Provocation, his demeanor, tone, and message radiated unmistakable disdain, as if he held no fear of their wrath.

Rayan, his expression unchanged, narrowed his eyes, turned away, and continued his stride toward the staircase, completely disregarding Lumian’s words.

Joseph, with brown hair and eyes to match, glanced at Lumian, then at Rayan. His gaze flickered, but he made no move to stop him.

Unfazed, Lumian calmly drew his revolver and discharged a round toward the staircase without hesitation.

With a bang, Rayan came to an abrupt standstill once again.

Slowly, he pivoted to face Lumian, exuding a palpable pressure from his eyes.

A subtle movement in Christo’s pocket betrayed his discomfort and vigilance, sensing imminent danger.

Unperturbed, Lumian, holding the revolver, issued a sincere apology, “I’m sorry, I am carrying a concealed firearm.”

As he spoke, he glanced back at Rayan and Joseph, a faint, fearless smile playing on his lips.

Joseph’s feigned polite smile crumbled, replaced by a piercing gaze fixed on Lumian, as if assessing the mob leader’s resolve, confidence, and strength.

Lumian contemplated uttering, “What are you staring at? If you want to fight, let’s fight. If not, back down.” to further infuriate the Trier Cave Association representatives, but considering the presence of “Rat” Christo, he abandoned the notion.

It would expose his true intention of provocation rather than investigating their true purpose, making it challenging to explain to Gardner Martin, the current or former Conspirer.

His unwavering gaze remained locked with Joseph and Rayan. With the revolver in his right hand, he deftly spun the cylinder.

After more than ten seconds that left “Rat” Christo visibly sweating, Joseph once again wore a polite smile and asked, “May we depart now, Monsieur Ciel?”

Oh, so you see through my true intentions of deliberately finding fault, hoping to get some action? Where’s your arrogance and self-esteem? Lumian chuckled inwardly and said in an infuriating tone,

“Not just yet.”

Rayan took an abrupt step forward, but Joseph restrained him.

The freckled, brown-haired, brown-eyed young man raised his chin slightly and locked eyes with Lumian.

“What must we do to gain your permission?”

Lumian’s smile held a tinge of disappointment as he replied, “Answer my question, why did you invite Christo and me to join the Cave Association? I don’t recall having a hobby of exploring and studying caves.”

Joseph fell into a brief silence before explaining, “Our association’s cave adventurers have encountered Christo several times underground and noticed his in-depth knowledge of Underground Trier. He appears to be well-acquainted with many hidden routes, which aligns with our cave association’s criteria for invitations.”

“Rat” Christo didn’t voice any objections to this explanation. Although his primary activities involved smuggling underground, there were no completely hidden smuggling routes. They inevitably crossed paths with tunnels and mines known to cave adventurers and quarry police. During these encounters, it was inevitable that he would come across a few “passersby” or be covertly observed from a distance.

Lumian, all the while, idly stroked the revolver’s muzzle without interrupting Joseph’s narrative.

Joseph paused for a brief moment before elaborating, “There are two reasons for your invitation.”

“The first reason is an Earth Blood ore specimen.”

The Earth Blood ore specimen… Lumian hadn’t anticipated this reason at all.

Without taking much time to consider, guided by his prankster instincts and recent advice from Anthony Reid, Lumian swiftly responded, “An Earth Blood ore specimen… Ah, I recall now. I acquired it from a lunatic named Flameng. Isn’t it just a stone? It holds no value to me. I don’t even know its whereabouts.”

Lumian then added with a touch of nostalgia, “It appears to have been stolen. I left it in a rented apartment. Heh heh, individuals like us rarely have a place solely for rest and sleep. My apartment was laden with numerous traps. Who would have imagined a thief successfully infiltrating and accessing the cabinet? What’s more, they only took the Earth Blood ore and left everything else untouched. It puzzled me at the time, making me wonder if my recollection was flawed—the stone has long been lost, and no thief had broken in…”

Ciel Dubois’s words were delivered with a sincere and detailed tone, and his demeanor conveyed an apparent lack of concern regarding the ore specimen. Now, it merely seemed like the loss of some insignificant item. Joseph and Rayan exchanged glances, their attitudes subtly shifting.

As Lumian finished his act, his mind raced, trying to decipher the rationale behind the Trier Cave Association’s interest in the Earth Blood ore.

The Earth Blood’s rock stratum has existed beneath Trier for centuries, if not millennia. The specific minerals concealed within it couldn’t have surfaced recently, catching the attention of Flameng and other mineral researchers…

Official factions in Trier and certain secretive organizations probably know that a select few minerals within the Earth Blood rock stratum hold a connection to the death of Blood Emperor Alista Tudor. However, they haven’t uncovered their practical significance, merely corrupting the minds of those who encountered them…

That night, I activated the brand on my right hand, causing numerous high-ranking individuals in Trier to sense it. Someone might have identified the aura of Blood Emperor Alista Tudor through various means, prompting an investigation into relevant items…

The whereabouts of the specific minerals within the Earth Blood rock stratum are a vital lead in their inquiry. Flameng’s belongings were registered with the market district’s police headquarters…

Given the Cave Association’s connection to the authorities, they likely accepted the mission and sought me out, the one who had acquired Flameng’s belongings…

But why didn’t they just send someone from the police headquarters to inquire directly? The Purifier, Machinery Hivemind, and Bureau 8 members all possess corresponding police identities…

Of course, the authorities aren't unified. They are officially divided between the government and the two Churches, but in practice, each faction harbors internal divisions.

The Eternal Blazing Sun Church's Order Of Preachers clashes with the Brotherhood Minor and other ideological factions. The Church of the God of Steam and Machinery's cloister system opposes the cathedral system. Bureau 8 is even more of a mixed bag. Some members come from secret organizations recognized by the government, some are former nobles like Sauron, who retains some influence, and others had been groomed by Bureau 8 over the years…

The only thing holding them together is the fact that Bureau 8 members can't officially align with any political party, or it would become even more chaotic…

In such a fractured environment, it is possible that a group within a faction had identified the Earth Blood ore's unique trail of clues but doesn't want others to know. Hence, they bypassed the police station's public channels and conducted their investigation through the unofficial Cave Association…

Perhaps someone within the Cave Association has recognized this clue and possesses an in-depth knowledge of underground terrain and mineral specimens. They are likely among the most proficient professionals…

Is this why they hadn't directly requested my cooperation with the investigation and instead attempted to recruit me into the Cave Association?

Lumian swiftly reached this preliminary conclusion, eagerly awaiting Joseph to reveal the second reason.

Joseph said, "We believed you had an interest in underground minerals and were a kindred spirit."

"Did it really get stolen, or did you leave it somewhere else but have forgotten about it?"

"It must have been stolen," Lumian said truthfully. "I found some traces of a break-in. Because of this, I became concerned about the gold I had saved, so I went to the bank to rent a safe deposit box for it."

Joseph nodded gently and said, "The second reason is that Kendall, an administrator of the catacombs, told us that among the individuals who brought Flameng's ashes there for burial, you seemed to possess a unique sensitivity to something abnormal that others couldn't perceive."

They connected the dots from the Earth Blood ore to the catacombs… Lumian was enlightened.

"I'm not sure what you mean by 'special.'"

Joseph didn't elaborate or push for further information. He simply looked at Lumian and asked, "Monsieur Ciel, may we leave now?"

Lumian regarded them for a few seconds before nodding slowly.

"Sure."

The situation had taken an unexpected turn, causing him to abandon his plan of provoking the two liaisons and antagonizing the Trier Cave Association further.

While he had undoubtedly irked Joseph and Rayan, they had also obtained the answers they were seeking, or at least a part of them. There might be minor repercussions in the future, but a major confrontation was unlikely.

After Joseph and Rayan disappeared down the stairs, Lumian sat in contemplation for several moments. He holstered his revolver, stood up, and addressed "Rat" Christo, "This situation is more complex than I anticipated. I need to report it to the Boss."

He considered a dangerous possibility.

If it turned out that the Sauron family was behind the investigation into the special Earth Blood ore through the Cave Association, and they discovered a connection between Ciel Dubois, a mob leader, and the supposed son of a wealthy businessman who exhibited peculiar behavior in Poufer Sauron's King's Pie game, it could pose a significant problem.

Therefore, he needed to inform Gardner Martin immediately, be forthright with him, and eliminate any potential hidden threats while seeking useful advice.

With the Iron and Blood Cross Order as a secret organization backing this entire operation and his primary mission assigned by Gardner Martin, Lumian had no intention of handling the matter on his own.

"Rat" Christo hesitated for a moment before forcing a smile and responding, "Alright."

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Chapter 415 - 415 The Sinner Complains First

415 The Sinner Complains First

Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, 11 Rue des Fontaines.

Lumian took the lead, briefly explaining the origins of the Earth Blood ore specimen.

“While I was staying at Auberge du Coq Doré, I crossed paths with a man named Flameng, a Lunatic who had a tragic encounter with the Montsouris ghost, leading to the bizarre deaths of his family.

“Occasionally, he regained lucidity. We drank together a few times. One day, he hanged himself. His belongings, including the Earth Blood ore specimen, ended up with the police. They said they were to hand them over to his surviving relatives, but they refused to accept them. Eventually, they asked me to retrieve them, which included the Earth Blood ore specimen.

“I knew that lunatic and had drinks with him. I didn’t throw away the mineral specimen and casually placed it in an iron cabinet of my safe house…”

Lumian spoke the truth, not a single word being false. He only concealed the fact that he had helped Flameng escape the Montsouris ghost and Termiboros’s reminder regarding the Earth Blood ore.

Gardner Martin, his brownish-red eyes reflecting wisdom and a touch of silver hair in his black hair, inquired, “Where is your safe house?”

Lumian replied honestly, “It’s in the leftmost room on the third floor of 19 Rue des Blouses Blanches.”

This wasn’t on the same side as Apartment 6, which had emitted a terrifying aura, and there was a distance between them, so Lumian’s answer was straightforward.

Gardner Martin smiled.

“No wonder you frequent Rue des Blouses Blanches so often. It’s not just because of Jenna.”

Boss, are you hinting at me not to visit Franca too often? Are you implying that you’re aware of this situation? Lumian grumbled and continued.

He gave the same story he had told Joseph and Rayan from the Cave Association.

Finally, Lumian subtly probed, “Will this pose a problem for our Savoie Mob? There might be an official faction hidden behind the Cave Association.”

He wanted to convey to Gardner Martin that his cover in front of Poufer Sauron might be at risk, trusting the boss’s intelligence to grasp the implication.

Gardner Martin gave a slight nod and turned his attention to “Rat” Christo, saying, “If you want to join the Cave Association, you can, but ensure it doesn’t interfere with our smuggling operations.”

Christo nodded repeatedly.

“Understood, Boss.”

Following Gardner Martin’s instructions, he departed from the study, leaving Lumian alone.

Gardner Martin smiled and consoled the official member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

It was a subtle message, urging Lumian to remain in the market district and continue overseeing Salle de Bal Brise, Auberge du Coq Doré, Salle de Gristmill, and other businesses.

Simultaneously, he sneered inwardly.

He keenly felt the irrationality of Gardner Martin’s plan.

Transitioning control to another Beyonder to oversee Salle de Bal Brise and other operations, allowing Lumian to slip into the shadows, was a straightforward task for the boss of the Savoie Mob and the Commanding Officer of the Iron and Blood Cross Order. There were no downsides to this arrangement.

Even though he couldn’t afford to mistreat Lumian, a subordinate on an important mission, he could compensate him by continuing to share the profits from Salle de Bal Brise and other businesses. He couldn’t risk keeping an official member, who had already attracted suspicion, in his current location.

While Lumian’s retreat into the shadows might make him appear even more suspicious, potentially putting the Savoie Mob in the crosshairs, Gardner Martin had encountered such challenges numerous times before. There had to be a solution.

Sensing the Commanding Officer of the Iron and Blood Cross Order’s suspicion, Lumian aimed to use the Cave Association to keep testing him.

His account and explanations were entirely truthful. Normally, Gardner Martin would believe him, but the issue was that too many unusual events had occurred

around him recently. As a former or current Conspirer, Gardner Martin would instinctively smell something fishy.

The detailed reasons were no longer enough to hide the overall abnormality.

With this thought in mind, Lumian's determination to kill surged.

He stared at Gardner Martin, positioned by the floor-to-ceiling windows, and estimated the distance between them to be about five meters.

At such a close range, if he were to suddenly employ the Spell of Harrumph, and Gardner Martin hadn't reached Sequence 4 and achieved godhood, lacking a mystical item to defend against such abilities, he could quickly subdue the Savoie Mob boss and eliminate him.

The current situation resembled that of two ordinary individuals without Beyonder powers standing within a five-meter radius. One held a high social status and excelled in combat, while the other held a low status and lacked physical strength. However, they both concealed a revolver and possessed exceptional marksmanship.

Within five meters, regardless of an ordinary person's status or combat skills, they would succumb to a single shot!

Considering the missions for the Tarot Club and the Aurora Order, Lumian composed himself and inquired, "Commanding Officer, I wish to purchase the Conspirer potion formula from the Order."

He had gained valuable insights from his advancement to Pyromaniac. He didn't want to go through the nerve-wracking process of searching for each Conspirer potion ingredient after digesting the Pyromaniac potion. His goal was to gather Conspirer ingredients in advance while continuing to digest the remaining Pyromaniac potion, thereby maximizing his time efficiency.

Gardner Martin responded with surprise, "Do you have that much cash for that?

"The Conspirer potion formula can command prices ranging from 70,000 to 80,000 verl d'or at the most mysticism gatherings, if not more. It's unlike Pyromaniacs, who are constantly perishing as others advance. Conspirers understand the importance of self-preservation, and they've become more cautious about sharing their Sequence potion formulas."

In Trier, the most common potion formulas available ranged from Sequence 9 to Sequence 7 of the Hunter pathway.

Without waiting for Lumian's reply, Gardner Martin grinned and added, "If you can unearth even a portion of the Sauron family's decline secret, I'll reward you with the Conspirer potion formula. It doesn't have to be the whole story, just a piece of the puzzle."

“If you’re eager to advance and don’t want to wait, as an official member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, you have the privilege of purchasing the Conspirer potion formula at a discounted price of 60,000 verl d’or.”

Lumian agreed without hesitation, “No problem. I’ll bring 60,000 verl d’or tomorrow.”

His initial plan had been to inquire with Mr. K and Madam Magician if Gardner Martin declined his request.

“Do you really have 60,000 verl d’or?” Gardner Martin chuckled.

In total, he had received 50,000 verl d’or in banknotes and gold, worth 30,000 verl d’or. After repaying Franca’s 25,000, he had 55,000 left. Combined with the original 1,000 gold, 1,000 banknotes, and 4,000 verl d’or, he had 61,000 verl d’or in liquid assets.

“Salle de Bal Unique…” Gardner Martin repeated, his expression growing more serious. “You really managed to retrieve the debt from Salle de Bal Unique?”

Evidently, the Commanding Officer of the Iron and Blood Cross Order was familiar with Salle de Bal Unique.

Lumian nodded, his demeanor open and honest.

“Yes.”

The members of the Savoie Mob at Salle de Bal Brise were more or less aware that he had helped Fitz collect his debt. Lumian couldn’t keep Gardner Martin in the dark, so he decided to disclose it directly to confuse the situation and divert the Iron and Blood Cross Order’s suspicions.

Furthermore, he could use this opportunity to put a little fear into Gardner Martin!

Gardner Martin scrutinized Lumian and subtly moved closer to the floor-to-ceiling windows.

After a few moments, he inquired with curiosity, “Have you never heard of the issues surrounding Salle de Bal Unique?”

“I have,” Lumian replied with a smile.

If he had a monocle, he might have playfully inserted it into his right eye socket at that moment, savoring Gardner Martin’s intriguing expressions and subconscious reactions.

After a pause, Lumian continued, “After accepting the commission, I conducted a thorough investigation of the dance hall and realized it wasn’t as simple as it seemed. It had a mysterious background and posed a significant danger, so I initially decided to abandon it. However, one day, while trailing an adversary, I

noticed something unusual. One of the guards at Salle de Bal Unique's entrance had inexplicably vanished. And upstairs, behind a window, their boss, Timmons, appeared to have lost his spirit.

"I saw this as an opportunity, so I made an attempt to enter and collect the debt. To my surprise, I succeeded!"

As Lumian spoke, he took a step forward and asked earnestly, "Commanding Officer, are there any hidden dangers I should be aware of?"

Gardner Martin discreetly took another step forward and smiled.

"Not at the moment. Keep an eye out for any future anomalies."

Lumian seized the opportunity to express his bewilderment.

"Commanding Officer, something doesn't quite add up. Why have there been so many events swirling around me lately? Some I initiated, while others just seemed to find their way to me. Am I truly a harbinger of trouble? Or has my recent fate been to rush around and handle things, leaving me constantly busy and weary?"

Gardner Martin regarded him with meaning and replied, "Perhaps, this is the destiny that every Hunter is bound to face."

After Lumian departed, Gardner Martin shifted his gaze to the side.

A hidden door creaked open, and Supervisor Olson emerged, bearing a resemblance to a hungry bear.

"How is it?" Gardner Martin inquired.

Olson smirked and responded, "It's natural for him to be discontent with your arrangements. His loyalty isn't firmly established yet. He won't be able to join your team for the time being."

Gardner Martin shifted the conversation thoughtfully.

"The calamity on him is more conspicuous than any of us. Is it possible that he's more compatible?"

Olson fell silent for a few moments before replying, "Let's observe and wait."

…

Meanwhile, as Lumian returned to the market district, Franca sat at Trocadéro's Red House Café. Her gaze fell upon Browns Sauron, her long, flowing orange-red hair resembling a waterfall, as she asked, "When will you folks complete the audit?"

Browns Sauron didn't provide a direct response. She studied Franca, who had black hair and brown eyes, for a moment before saying, "We've identified a

suspected member of the Bliss Society.”

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Chapter 416 - 416 Suspect

416 Suspect

You're quite efficient. After receiving the warning, you swiftly unearthed the problem and found the clues. Instead of confirming it yourself, you're now informing me directly, intending to leverage this issue for the final audit? No wonder you didn't respond when I inquired about the audit completion date… Franca's mind raced as she grasped Browns Sauron's true intentions, representing the Demoness Sect.

Admiring the Demoness's appearance and demeanor, she smiled and asked, "Is it just a suspicion?"

She was prompting the other party to provide more details.

Browns Sauron ran her fingers through her long orange-red hair and spoke with a somber expression, "After learning from you that the Bliss Society interacts with the participants in the orgies, I observed my friends and noticed two members who were behaving unusually.

"One of them fell in love with a man once again and entered into a romantic relationship. Consequently, she started declining participation in the female orgies. The other one encountered a new woman and succumbed to her advances, leading to feelings of guilt for betraying us."

Friends? Girlfriends! Franca couldn't help but criticize.

She smiled and inquired, "Who do you suspect are the members of the Bliss Society?"

"That woman," Browns Sauron's aura remained dark. "She took the initiative to ask about the orgies and reassured Adaina that there was no need to feel guilty. She claimed that everyone has the right to control their bodies and freely indulge their desires without caring about others' opinions, societal judgments, moral restrictions, or religious constraints. She also stated that only deities and churches that genuinely embrace free will, physical freedom, and desire freedom are worth following."

Physical freedom, desire freedom… It's indeed the hallmark of the Mother Tree of Desire's believers… The core members of the Bliss Society truly excel as Actors. Their acting skills are remarkable. They can artfully package indulgence and debauchery, presenting desires as a manifestation of willpower, subtly diminishing the importance of rationality, clarity, and thoughtful reflection… Franca clicked her tongue and inwardly sighed.

For a Demoness of Pleasure, this approach proved highly effective. If the surrounding humans believed it, she could swiftly immerse them in intense and genuine pleasure, causing them to lose themselves in a sea of indulgence. Long-term consequences and effects were typically disregarded by most Demonesses, as they would have already digested the potion by then.

However, Franca could discern that Browns Sauron was possessive and didn't want her girlfriends to engage with humans outside of the orgies.

"That certainly resembles the Bliss Society," Franca objectively remarked.

Browns added with a gloomy expression, "As for the other one, the lover is primarily concerned with money, houses, banquets, vacations, and various luxury items. It's quite evident that he's a male courtesan. They understand women very well, are eloquent, and possess considerable capabilities."

"What do you plan to do?" Franca asked curiously.

She sensed that Browns Sauron wasn't the type to simply give up on one of her girlfriends, especially when the new lover seemed unreliable.

Browns Sauron hesitated for a few moments before saying, "I've encountered him before, and I can tell he harbors an unusual desire for me. I intend to teach him a lesson, immersing him in pleasure without granting him true gratification. Once his body and mind are completely under my control, I'll discard him."

Wow… Did you learn this without a mentor? Do you even remember your original form? Franca raised an eyebrow, finding a rare target for mockery.

Browns glanced at her mockingly and retorted, "Based on what I've discovered and confirmed, you have two male lovers. One is mature, and the other is young. You seem to excel at enjoying yourself."

Her implication was clear: "What right do you have to mock me? I'm merely planning to offer that man some pleasure without engaging in actual intimacy. As for you, you've long abandoned your gender, ending up in the beds of different men!"

Half of my reputation has been tarnished by Ciel! Franca didn't lose her composure over the humiliation. She maintained a smile and said, "I view this as a unique experience.

"I've already become a woman. How can I not explore something entirely different from my previous existence? If you don't experiment now, you may never have the chance in the future. Don't you desire to return to your original form. Do you not know how?"

She subtly hinted at her knowledge of mysticism, paving the way for revealing her true motives for infiltrating the Savoie Mob in the future.

Browns was left momentarily speechless, unable to refute Franca Roland's twisted logic.

Franca continued, "Life is confined to just a few decades. Why confine yourself to such a limited scope? As long as you avoid indulgence and obsession and always remain true to yourself, you're merely experiencing the present moment. Why not venture into various realms and experiences?"

At this moment, Franca had an epiphany.

Pleasure wasn't just something to offer to others; it was also meant for oneself!

Is this my first principle of acting…? No wonder my digestion speed hasn't been slowing down recently; it's even considered fast… How can being coy be considered Pleasure? Franca thought with a sense of delight.

Browns fell silent for a few seconds before speaking, "Your mindset surpasses my expectations, but with this mindset, it will be very, very challenging for you to perform a ritual, advance to Affliction, or experience pain and inflict it."

"I'm currently focused on Pleasure. I'll deal with Affliction when the time comes," Franca replied casually.

The digestion process would take months, half a year, or even longer to complete. What was the point of worrying too much?

Browns glanced at Franca for a moment, feeling a mix of repulsion and envy.

It wasn't that she desired it, but the Demonesses she had encountered, whether at higher Sequences or those who had just consumed the Witch potion, lacked this calmness and radiance. Each of them carried their own distortions, conflicts, and pain, and some even teetered on the edge of madness.

Browns decided not to delve further into personal philosophy and steered the conversation back on track.

"Adaina encountered the suspected Bliss Society member at an art exhibition. She goes by the name Theresa and comes from a former noble family. She's now an art dealer.

"I've conducted some investigation. Her identity and name are real, but they don't belong to her. In other words, there is a real art dealer named Theresa. She's impersonating her and has altered her appearance to make herself more appealing.

"This aligns with the characteristics of an Actor, as you mentioned. When Adaina had intimate contact with her, she also experienced the abilities of a Sex Addict.

"I attempted to tail her earlier, but I was too cautious and lost her trail.

"Adaina has a date with her tonight."

Franca listened attentively and then asked thoughtfully, “Can we trust Adaina now?”

Browns’s expression contorted as she replied, “She can be trusted.”

Franca didn’t press further and reminded her deliberately, “Then, will she exhibit any unusual behavior during her date with Theresa tonight? She’s dealing with an Actor.”

“Perhaps. She needs a Psychiatrist or an even more powerful Beyonder of the Spectator pathway to plant a cue or hypnotize her. This will help her maintain her normal state and prevent Theresa from becoming suspicious.

“If you can’t find one in a hurry, I can introduce someone, but it will come at a cost.”

Browns’s expression softened as she nodded in agreement.

“You’re indeed more experienced than I am.”

Following her sigh, she smiled and asked, “Is that Psychiatrist also a man?”

Franca was taken aback.

“Yes.”

Hey, what kind of image do you have of me!

The two of them silently refrained from discussing which side would handle the subsequent questions after identifying the fake Theresa. It was as if they had already reached an unspoken agreement.

…

At 7 p.m., in Quartier de la Maison d’Opéra, just outside the Delan Music Hall, Franca and Lumian, both dressed in light-colored pants, walked toward the entrance while discreetly holding each other’s arms.

They had used Lie to alter their appearances and heights, ensuring that they wouldn’t be recognized by anyone they might know.

Their target for this operation was the woman entering the concert hall, about seven to eight meters away.

Among them, Adaina, a participant in the Red House female orgies, had long, light-yellow hair with thin, curly bangs. Her face was powdered, her eyes light blue, and her nose perky, making her quite attractive. As for the art dealer, Theresa, she had long, wavy brown hair and a simple style. When her flaxen-colored eyes scanned the surroundings, they sparkled with liveliness.

This woman, suspected to be a member of the Bliss Society, had somewhat stiff facial features. It lacked softness but still exuded a strange charm.

Inside the small concert hall, Lumian and Franca found their seats and then swiftly locked onto Theresa and Adaina's location, discreetly observing them from behind.

Franca watched with interest as Adaina and Theresa leaned against each other, feigning intimacy.

It was a pity that, despite her claim of loving women, Franca's limited experience mainly revolved around "teasing" Gardner Martin's other lovers. She had seldom been able to admire such scenes from a distance.

"Be careful," Lumian warned with a sigh.

Franca responded disapprovingly, "For a Trierien, this attitude is entirely normal. Look around you. Aren't others openly watching as well?"

Lumian snorted and didn't push the matter further.

Their immediate objective was observation, not tailing. It was crucial to assess the target's situation before taking any action.

Turning an ambush and surprise attack into an open confrontation would be a failure for any Hunter.

Lumian's primary goal was to gather information about Theresa's probable Sequence. If she happened to be a Sequence 7 Actor or a Sequence 6 Recipient, Lumian was confident in executing a successful surprise attack. However, if she turned out to be a Fallen Tree Spirit of a specific tree with a changed lifeform, the effectiveness of the Spell of Harrumph might be questionable.

Although Franca had suggested using Magic Mirror Divination to gather this intel, Lumian still wanted to witness it firsthand. The desires of a corresponding Sequence of the Mother Tree of Desire pathway couldn't be easily concealed!

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Chapter 417 - 417 The Importance of Intel

417 The Importance of Intel

The concert began as scheduled, and Theresa and Aldina separated, completely immersed in the orchestra's performance.

Franca withdrew her gaze with regret and closed her eyes, savoring a symphony that evoked the image of moonlight glistening on a tranquil lake at night.

Lumian had received no formal education in this domain, so his knowledge of music was limited to three things. Firstly, Aurore's occasional humming and the melodies of shepherds' flutes. Secondly, songs from places like Ol' Tavern, Cordu Village Square, and Salle de Bal Brise, which were often laced with suggestive lyrics and rhythms. Lastly, the psalms from the Eternal Blazing Sun's Mass. However, now, he found himself deeply moved by the band's performance. His mood gradually settled, as if he could envision Cordu Village and the highland pasture nestled in the darkness.

It was a serene night, adorned with a canopy of stars.

Lumian wasn't entirely captivated by the music. From the corner of his eye, he scrutinized the lady impersonating Theresa, carefully observing her every move.

The imposter Theresa appeared highly emotional, her demeanor shifting from sorrowful during the lyrical passages to exuberant during the ensemble. She seemed to be completely attuned to the fluctuations in the music.

Lumian pondered whether she had an exceptional affinity for music or if she harbored a strong desire to perform and convey something profound.

If it was the latter, Lumian could tentatively conclude that the imposter Theresa was likely a Sequence 7 Actor. Based on his understanding of the Mother Tree of Desire's boon pathways, Beyonders typically wouldn't be so profoundly affected by the desires associated with a Sequence after moving beyond it. However, there might still be a more pronounced influence compared to ordinary individuals.

As time passed, the orchestra played three symphonies, culminating in the conductor turning, bowing, and addressing the audience.

"The final movement is titled 'The Girl Under the Moon.' I'd like to invite the most beautiful lady here onto the stage, so that our entire orchestra can have the honor of taking a photograph with her as a beautiful memento."

Franca quickly lowered her head.

She had no desire to be chosen and become the center of attention.

This would embarrass her a little.

Nonetheless, she wasn't overly concerned. Having altered her appearance and height with Lie, she could only be considered ordinary and mildly charming. After all, the greatest challenge for a Demoness of Pleasure when tailing a target lay in their inherent beauty, charisma, and attention-grabbing aura. If she didn't become invisible or remain concealed in the shadows, she ran the risk of being discovered.

Such requests were not uncommon in Trier, and several women in the audience were eager to step forward.

To them, being chosen would symbolize a significant acknowledgment of their appearance and demeanor.

Lumian's gaze swept over the attendees, eventually settling on Aldina and the imposter Theresa.

The former seemed visibly excited, her anticipation clear in her demeanor. On the other hand, the latter's body exhibited an abnormal tension, and she trembled slightly, a mix of excitement and nervousness evident in her demeanor.

Upon witnessing these reactions, Lumian couldn't help but smirk slightly, gaining a rough understanding of the fake Theresa's situation.

The desire for recognition was one of the fundamental desires of a Sequence 6 Recipient of the Mother Tree of Desire pathway!

The invitation to bring the most beautiful lady onto the stage for a photograph wasn't a mere coincidence—Lumian had sponsored it himself.

Ultimately, he had succeeded in convincing the conductor, not just because he had used Franca's 1,000 verl d'or, but also because Lumian had provided a compelling reason.

It was a romantic gesture intended for a certain lady, a gesture driven solely by affection, without any expectation of reciprocation or leaving a name.

Romantic gestures had a special place in the hearts of these Trier artists.

Through this event, Lumian sought to "detect" whether the fake Theresa harbored any exceptional desires.

A skilled Hunter couldn't simply wait for opportunities to arise; they had to know how to create them!

Of course, the precondition was having sufficient intel. Otherwise, planning with precision or avoiding easy detection would be impossible.

The conductor scanned the room and singled out the woman whom he believed to be the most beautiful.

He also assumed that she was the object of the young man's affection from earlier in the day.

Such extraordinary beauty was a rarity!

The woman, with her bright gray eyes and neatly tied black hair, gracefully approached the orchestra, while the fake Theresa slouched in her seat, unable to hide her disappointment, regret, and frustration.

"How should I address you?" the conductor inquired of the lady in the elegant black court dress beside him.

With a gentle and melodious voice, she replied, "Clarice."

Franca gazed at Clarice with admiration, finding her exceptionally captivating, although she couldn't quite pinpoint the reason why.

After the concert concluded, Lumian and Franca decided not to tail Adaina and the impostor Theresa. Instead, they headed straight to Room 502 in Apartment 25 on Rue Ménier in the square district.

This was a rented apartment that they had temporarily cleared out by paying. Across the way, in Room 401 of Building 23, was Adaina's chosen rendezvous point for clandestine meetings.

Tonight, she would return to that very room with the fake Theresa.

With Lumian and Franca's enhanced Beyonder vision, the distance between them and the target room wasn't enough to obscure their view of the situation inside. Their primary objective now was to remain hidden and avoid detection by the fake Theresa while observing.

Before long, the window of Room 401 in Apartment 23 across the street illuminated. Several gas wall lamps cast a bright glow throughout the living room.

Immediately after, Lumian witnessed the passionate embrace between the fake Theresa and Adaina as they approached the glass window.

Their longing was palpable, but they also wanted to shield their intimate moment from prying eyes.

"Quite focused," Lumian teased with a smile.

Franca didn't reply, her breathing growing heavier.

“Be prepared,” Lumian whispered to Franca, making sure the fake Theresa’s attention was on her companion.

Her primary mission was to watch for any unexpected developments.

Without hesitation, Lumian activated the black mark on his right shoulder.

A faint light shimmered beneath his clothing, and he vanished from the shadows of Building 25.

Across the street in the apartment, Adaina and the impostor Theresa wrestled with the curtains while they were stuck to one another, attempting to shield the glass window.

Lumian’s form materialized suddenly, two meters behind the fake Theresa, facing Adaina, whose eyes were clouded with desire and cheeks flushed.

Adaina’s eyes narrowed, and her pupils dilated. She couldn’t fathom how a tall, slender man with blond hair and blue eyes had appeared in her room out of nowhere.

For a moment, it felt like she was trapped in a surreal dream. The disjunction between her physical senses and her bewildered mind was stark.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian let out a heavy harrumph.

Two beams of white light shot from his nose, targeting the fake Theresa and affecting Adaina.

In unison, the two women closed their eyes and slumped into unconsciousness.

Lumian acted swiftly, catching the fake Theresa before she could fall to the ground. He then raised his right palm and delivered a firm strike behind her ear.

A mystical coma combined with a physical one!

With the fake Theresa safely incapacitated, Lumian gently placed her on the carpet, keeping a cautious distance from the unconscious Adaina.

He squatted beside the woman he suspected to be a Recipient and began searching her dress and handbag for canisters.

Having familiarized himself with the mystical drugs commonly used by the Bliss Society, Lumian located a canister of sedatives, unscrewed the cap, and brought it to the fake Theresa’s nose, allowing her to inhale its contents for more than ten seconds.

Only then did Lumian exhale a sigh of relief. He stowed away the sedative, no longer concerned about the imposter Theresa waking up suddenly.

He stood up and made his way to the glass window, where the curtain was only partially closed. Lumian signaled to the fifth floor of the opposite building with his thumb and index finger forming a circle, while his other three fingers remained extended.

He was informing Franca that the operation had been successful. The target was under control, and she could join him now. Lumian might need to employ Magic Mirror Divination later.

After drawing the curtains shut, Lumian turned his attention to the unconscious fake Theresa and sighed inwardly.

Intel is crucial…

The same principle applied to the synergy of abilities.

Without a rough understanding of the names and characteristics of Sequence 9 to Sequence 5 within the Actor pathway, along with knowledge of their corresponding desires and states, Lumian wouldn't have taken such a calculated risk. He wouldn't have been able to resolve the situation in just a few seconds.

As for the Contractee's three abilities, if they weren't carefully chosen and harmonized, they could easily be defeated by a Sequence 9 Hunter, much like the mouth-orifice monster in Cordu's ruins. Even with Spirit World Traversal and the Spell of Harrumph, Lumian might stand a chance against some Sequence 5s, but it would be a formidable challenge to sustain such efforts.

…

As Lumian waited for Franca to join him in the adjacent apartment to Adaina's,

Browns Sauron remained hidden in the shadows, her keen senses tuned to the situation behind the wall as she gazed at the building opposite.

She could already discern the sounds of Adaina and the fake Theresa returning to the apartment, along with the rustle of curtains being drawn. These scenes seemed to play out vividly in her mind.

The situation tormented her. She felt a deep sense of injustice and pain, as though she had willingly sent her lover into the arms of her romantic rival.

Despite her understanding that this was a carefully planned trap and that her lover and her rival had been intimate on multiple occasions, she still felt an overwhelming sense of worry and anxiety. The sporadic noises only fueled her imagination with various scenarios.

Standing there made her uncomfortable, and leaning against the wall didn't alleviate her unease.

Observing Franca and her young lover's concealed apartment across the way, Browns Sauron couldn't help but mutter with frustration, "Why haven't they launched their attack yet?"

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Chapter 418 - 418 Beatrice

418 Beatrice

Franca ended her concealment and quietly opened the door to Adaina's apartment. The first thing she saw was Lumian, a tall, slender man with blond hair and blue eyes. He was crouched beside the unconscious Adaina, vigorously wiping her face with a wet towel.

Franca lowered her voice and asked in confusion, "W-what are you doing?"

Shouldn't the target be the Bliss Society member posing as Theresa, the art dealer?

Lumian smirked and responded, "I've had a sudden thought.

"Actors can impersonate anyone. Once the imposter Theresa establishes an intimate relationship with Aldina, she can easily control this female companion and impersonate her to infiltrate the Red House Café's female orgies."

"Allowing Adaina, who everyone is familiar with, to convey the Bliss Society's philosophy and hidden evil god faith will definitely be more persuasive and trustworthy than a new member."

At this point, Lumian gazed toward the bedroom in a chilling tone and said, "Perhaps, the real Adaina is hidden in a corner here, in the form of a corpse."

Franca couldn't help but imagine such a grim scenario and took a deep breath.

She straightened her back and muttered to herself, "Not a bad story. I'll share it with Jenna later."

After her muttering, she silently closed the door and approached Lumian, refuting his suspicion.

"Browns Sauron is likely a Demoness of Pleasure. Surely, she can recognize the authenticity of her female companion? Furthermore, she interrogated Adaina and knows the approximate abilities of an Actor."

Lumian, who had been "assisting" Adaina in removing her makeup, confirmed that despite her altered appearance, she was still the same person.

He chuckled and said, "Based on your description, I don't fully trust Browns Sauron's judgment. She clearly has less experience in the Beyonder domain than you. However, since she has the Demoness Sect backing her and confirmation has been made, the interrogation results are still credible."

Lumian didn't spare Adaina another glance. He gestured towards the fake Theresa, who had been hit with a triple dose of unconsciousness—the Harrumph Spell, a physical knockout, and a sedative from the Bliss Society. He turned to Franca and said, "Use Magic Mirror Divination to confirm if she's a core member of the Bliss Society."

While Lumian had already suspected the fake Theresa was a core member based on her performance at the concert, they hadn't followed her closely the entire way. They had instead been waiting at their destination. What if she had sensed something amiss and had switched to a decoy during the journey?

Considering the fake Theresa possessed a unique concoction like the Bliss Society's truth serum, she was undoubtedly connected to the Bliss Society. However, it remained uncertain if she was a core member.

This answer would guide Lumian's subsequent actions.

…

Next door to Adaina's apartment, Browns Sauron continued to monitor the commotion. She could hear faint and indistinct conversations but couldn't detect much else.

Adaina and the fake Theresa plan to chat for a while and have some red wine? Though it isn't overly passionate, it holds a romantic ambiance… Browns Sauron glanced at the building opposite, mentally urging Franca and her lover to begin, hoping they wouldn't wait until the fake Theresa was completely engrossed in desire before launching a surprise attack.

…

In the living room of Adaina's apartment, Franca raised her right palm and rapidly created a crystalline icicle. With precision, she pierced the fake Theresa's hand, drawing a small amount of blood.

The fake Theresa instinctively pulled back her arm but hadn't broken through the three-layered coma.

Franca then smeared the blood on a mirror, intending to use it as a medium and sacrifice to ask an entity from the Underworld, hoping to obtain a unique identification of spirits.

Once all preparations were complete, Franca picked up the mirror and recited in Hermes,

"The shadow that lingers in the Underworld, the friendly creature that can be communicated with, the unique eye that never dies…"

The surface of the blood-stained mirror suddenly emitted a dark green hue, and a pale-white aqueous light rippled.

After reciting the incantation, Franca asked respectfully, “Is the owner of the blood Theresa, the art dealer?”

“No,” came an indifferent voice from the mirror, as if enduring the corrosion of endless time.

Franca posed her second question.

“Is the owner of the blood a core member of Trier’s Bliss Society?”

The indifferent voice gradually faded.

“Yes.”

Franca refrained from asking further questions, as the entity only answered two at a time.

She watched as the pale-white aqueous light rapidly receded, and the blood on the mirror’s surface strangely seeped in and disappeared.

Turning to Lumian, Franca reported, “She’s a core member of the Bliss Society.”

Lumian let out a soft sigh and said, “Unfortunately, I don’t know how to perform a lobotomy. Anthony Reid isn’t a Hypnotist yet, so we can only channel the spirit directly.”

Using the truth serum didn’t guarantee that the fake Theresa wouldn’t resist when she woke up. Given her faith and abilities, a fierce battle was inevitable when the time came, and there was a high chance that she would be killed. In that case, he decided to proceed now.

As Lumian spoke, he crouched down, his right palm ablaze with crimson flames.

The flames intertwined and swiftly converged, turning white.

Gently pressing his right palm against the fake Theresa’s body, the blazing white fireball vanished into thin air.

Rumble!

A muffled explosion erupted from within the fake Theresa’s body. She trembled a few times before life left her completely.

Franca had been busy preparing the Magic Mirror Spirit Channeling Spell during this entire process.

While she could forcibly channel the spirit while the fake Theresa was unconscious, it wasn’t a safe option. It could lead to unnecessary trouble for her mind and spirit, and the fact that the target believed in an evil god meant there was a risk of corruption if she wasn’t careful.

…

Next door to Adaina's apartment, hidden in the shadows, Browns Sauron sensed a subtle fluctuation.

Powers have been used. Has it begun? She wondered if the imposter Theresa had initiated the powers of the Mother Tree of Desire pathway to flirt or if Franca Roland and her lover had already infiltrated the target location and were preparing to attack.

Without hesitation, Browns Sauron, dressed in a black hunting suit, silently pushed open the window and crawled out through the shadows. She clung to the outer wall and slowly approached Adaina's apartment.

…

Franca completed the Magic Mirror Spirit Channeling Spell, and the dark and deep mirror aqueous light flickered, "reflecting" a beautiful yet pale-white face.

"What's your name?" Franca asked directly, using the simplest question to test the effect of the Magic Mirror Spirit Channeling Spell.

The fake Theresa's illusory voice replied, "I'm Beatrice Incourt."

"What's your true identity?" Franca continued to ask.

Beatrice Incourt's expression remained stoic as she replied, "I run a winery. It's from my deceased husband."

Franca then directed the question to the crucial point.

"Are you a core member of the Bliss Society?"

"Yes." Beatrice Incourt's nod was subtle.

Franca didn't delve into the Bliss Society's faith or any recent revelations. Although she wasn't as fearful of the evil god, the Mother Tree of Desire, as she was of the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings, to the point of not daring to channel spirits, she was aware of the risks involved. She knew what to ask and what not to ask, what was safe, and what could lead to corruption.

After a brief pause, she inquired, "Do you know Lumian Lee or Ciel Dubois?"

Beatrice replied in a daze, "I don't know."

I don't know… Lumian, who was listening, raised his eyebrows.

None of the core members of the Bliss Society know about Susanna Mattise's ultimate plan?

Franca was equally surprised. She frowned and asked, “Why did Susanna Mattise go to the market district before her death?”

Beatrice Incourt replied calmly, “She wanted to awaken the great divine tree and allow its roots to enter Fourth Epoch Trier, allowing its crown to reach into the kingdom of the false gods.”

“Did she say what the awakening process was?” Franca pressed.

Beatrice Incourt’s voice grew colder, and her expression became more wooden.

“She didn’t say.”

They really don’t know that Susanna Mattise wanted to capture me and sacrifice me to the Mother Tree of Desire? Lumian’s thoughts raced, and he whispered a name to Franca: “Maipú Meyer.”

Franca understood and asked the spirit in the mirror, “Where is Maipú Meyer?”

Maipú Meyer was the former manager of Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, Susanna Mattise’s paramour, and her most trusted subordinate.

Beatrice replied in a voice increasingly resembling the dead, “I’m not sure. He’s a man, and we despise and keep a distance from him.”

Upon hearing this, Lumian was enlightened, roughly understanding the reason.

Regarding the Tree of Shadow, Susanna Mattise, who had become an evil spirit, was extremely extreme in her choices and actions. She didn’t inform the other core members of the Bliss Society about the detailed situation or progress. Only her direct subordinates, Maipú Meyer and Charlotte Calvino, knew the complete plan.

After Susanna Mattise and Charlotte Calvino’s deaths, Maipú Meyer, who had relied on the former to become a core member of the Bliss Society, was ostracized and suppressed. Consequently, he didn’t divulge the relevant issues to anyone else.

This made sense. A secret organization centered around “desire” would undoubtedly experience a multitude of desires, both open and covert. Maipú Meyer was a visible anomaly among the core group that advocated women and loved women.

Franca pondered for a few seconds and changed her question, “What are Maipú Meyer’s plans for the time being?”

Beatrice’s face turned pale-white and green, and even her stiff expression vanished.

“A few weeks ago, Maipú Meyer mentioned that he wanted to sneak back to the market district to do something. I haven’t seen him since.”

Sneak back to the market district to do something? Lumian and Franca were alarmed by this revelation.

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Chapter 419 - 419 New Priestess

419 New Priestess

Why did Maipú Meyer return to the market district?

Could it be that Maipú Meyer genuinely cared for Susanna Mattise and sought retribution?

But even then, exposing the true killer and concealed secrets to the other core members of the Bliss Society seemed like the most fitting way to exact revenge!

Without harnessing the collective might of the entire organization, he would inadvertently aid his adversary, Lumian, by relying solely on his own capabilities!

As Lumian observed Beatrice's pallid countenance and vacant gaze, he tried to think from Maipú Meyer's perspective and find a rationale for his actions.

Maipú Meyer, a Sequence 6 Recipient, harbors an insatiable hunger for recognition and a fervent desire to accomplish something noteworthy…

Despite facing rejection and isolation from the other core members of the Bliss Society, he does have a motive to make a substantial solo contribution and earn genuine recognition…

While revealing the existence of the Tree of Shadow to Beatrice and the others could be seen as a contribution, it doesn't measure up to rectifying his past mistakes independently to appease the Mother Tree of Desire to the fullest extent. The latter would truly earn him recognition…

This peculiar competition might be perplexing to ordinary folks, but it isn't unusual for a Recipient to engage in it…

The question now is: What does Maipú Meyer hope to achieve in his quest for recognition?

Is it revenge against me? Although a direct confrontation holds little hope for him, he could pose a significant threat if he conceals himself in the shadows and suddenly influences me at a critical moment. After all, I lack a substitute ability, and my physical strength hasn't undergone a qualitative change compared to ordinary people. He could eliminate me with a revolver.

However, Maipú Meyer must have heard plenty about me from Susanna Mattise. There is a good chance he knows about the angel sealed within my body. Isn't he concerned that corruption might erupt after my demise, potentially dragging him

down as well?

If he were to perish, how could he satisfy his yearning for recognition?

Or is it the mere notion of taking a formidable foe with him to the grave that would leave the other members of the Bliss Society awestruck and filled with genuine remorse and admiration? Is his ultimate aim to climax in tears and be propelled towards his demise by desire?

Otherwise, does he aspire to make a sacrifice akin to Susanna Mattise's? Yes, securing recognition from the Mother Tree of Desire is a higher-level and noble pursuit.

But the Tree of Shadow is severely damaged and won't recover for a long time. How can he even make such a sacrifice

Lumian struggled to decipher Maipú Meyer's plan or intentions, vaguely grasping his motives.

Nonetheless, Lumian couldn't suppress a surge of frustration and violence at the mere thought of a pair of icy eyes lurking among the pedestrians, nearby tenants, dance hall customers, and peddlers. It was as though someone close to him had been replaced by Maipú Meyer without anyone's awareness. He burned with anticipation to unmask the Actor.

The detrimental effects of the contracts, items, and brands on him continued to destabilize his emotions.

Franca, on the other hand, didn't dwell on this. Although the Magic Mirror Spirit Channeling Spell endured much longer than standard spirit channeling spells, it was not entirely boundless. There was still a time limit, one measured in minutes. She was unwilling to squander this precious time on analysis that could be postponed.

"Of all the members of the Bliss Society, who does Maipú Meyer have the closest relationship with?"

"He had the strongest bonds with the members in the market district, but they're either deceased or captured."

Genuinely ostracized… Franca's hopes dimmed, and she inquired further,

"Who in the Bliss Society is most likely to be privy to Maipú Meyer's whereabouts and plans?"

Beatrice responded lifelessly, "No one, not even the new high priestess."

Franca found herself at a dead end and changed her line of questioning.

"Who is this new high priestess?"

Beatrice's eyes were piercingly vacant as she replied, "It's Siber."

"What's her true identity?" Franca pressed.

Beatrice's eyes on the mirror's surface seemed far more translucent than before.

"I don't know. She joined us later. At that point, we had evolved beyond a simple lesbian organization. We started concealing our true identities.

"Siber might still be a theater actress."

…

On the outer wall of Adaina's apartment, Browns Sauron clung there in silence, resembling a colossal black spider.

Through the curtains, she could only discern two shadows not far away. The voices were even fainter and more distant than before, but she could vaguely identify them as female.

Adaina and the imposter Theresa are still conversing? That doesn't add up. At this proximity, with an Assassin's acute hearing, I should be able to clearly hear them even through the sealed glass window and thick drapes… What's happening inside? Browns Sauron's anxiety and curiosity swelled as she attempted to extend invisible spider silk through the gap in the window.

…

Franca's Magic Mirror Spirit Channeling Spell had reached its limit, and she concluded it rationally. She watched as Beatrice Incourt's image faded from the mirror's surface.

She wasn't overly disheartened because she already knew the crucial details about several core members of the Bliss Society and their weekly gatherings' time, venue, and method.

But there is no need to personally track them. They are unaware of Ciel. Even if the Rose School of Thought locates them, they wouldn't extract any valuable information… Franca cast a glance at Lumian, stowed away the mirror, and dispelled the wall of spirituality.

Amidst the howling wind, the two of them sensed a disturbance at the window and the presence of a figure that seemed human.

The wall of spirituality had isolated their movements, reducing interference but also affecting their perception and surveillance of the surroundings.

Franca's form abruptly vanished, and Lumian sidestepped, evading the window's direct line of sight.

They didn’t rush to attack because they had a vague notion of who was outside.

Just as she was about to react, she spotted Franca Roland’s current disguised countenance.

Their gazes locked, and silence hung in the air for over ten seconds.

Finally, Browns snapped out of her trance and inquired with concern, “Where’s Adaina?”

“She’s unconscious.” Franca gestured towards the carpet near the window.

Browns scrutinized her female partner, then glanced at the motionless impostor Theresa, and queried once more, “Has it been dealt with?”

“It’s resolved,” Franca replied calmly.

The spirit channeling had already come to an end!

Browns’s gaze darted between Franca and Lumian, her expression a mix of surprise and confusion. She inquired,

“When did you launch the attack?”

Before the curtains were fully drawn… Franca was about to respond, but she hesitated, realizing that revealing the timing of the attack might expose Ciel and her combat abilities. Instead, she quickly changed her response and smiled.

“Why don’t you take a guess?”

Browns Sauron recollected the faint movements she had sensed but found no overt signs of a battle.

This left her even more astonished.

Could this wild Demoness and her young partner be truly that formidable?

Are their richer experiences and varied gains truly that advantageous?

Consumed by jealousy, Browns leaped into the room and shut the window.

She doesn’t seem concerned about being attacked by us at all… Is she inexperienced, or does she have great confidence in the Demoness’s various substitutes? Or is there something she’s relying on? Lumian observed with indifference, making no move.

Franca maintained her smile and said, “We’ve gathered some intel, including information on the current high priestess of the Bliss Society and a few core members.”

She began recounting the information she had acquired from Beatrice.

The more Browns listened, the more astonished she became.

They managed to gather so much intel?

This should have taken a significant amount of time!

When did they attack and how long did they take to finish the battle?

It couldn't be that the imposter Theresa was ambushed the moment she entered the room and approached the window, could they?

Based on her observations, this member of the Bliss Society appeared to be a Sequence 6 Recipient, on par with her and Franca Roland, even surpassing the suspected Sequence 7 Pyromaniac, Ciel Dubois!

Franca paid no heed to Browns's reaction and continued, "I'm pleased to inform you that our problem is simpler than we thought, and it's been resolved. Now, it's your problem. Heh heh, Beatrice isn't the only core member of the Bliss Society with an interest in the Red House Café."

She was subtly suggesting that the Demoness Sect should "take over" in eliminating the remaining members of the Bliss Society.

"Are you instigating me?" Browns asked sharply.

Franca replied with a smile, "No, just a reminder."

While they continued their conversation, Lumian returned to Beatrice's lifeless form, crouched down, and conducted a more thorough search.

This time, he discovered banknotes and gold coins amounting to 1,500 verl d'or, along with a neatly folded note.

Lumian unfolded the note and read the Intisian written on it: "Go to the hostel and retrieve the painting within three days."

Hostel… What hostel? What painting is this referring to? This seems like a deal made by the authentic art dealer, Theresa, but somehow, the receipt ended up in the hands of the impostor? Where is the real Theresa now… We forgot to inquire about this… Lumian pondered the implications as he held the note.

He stood up, prepared to question Browns Sauron about the real Theresa's situation. Although Browns recognized that Franca was trying to instigate her, she couldn't deny that Franca had a point.

Browns looked down at Adaina, attempting to rouse her.

At that moment, all three of them halted simultaneously and directed their attention toward Beatrice Incourt's lifeless body.

The light over there seemed to dim slightly, and the corpse underwent a subtle transformation.

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Chapter 420 - 420 Beyonder Item

420 Beyonder Item

Beatrice Incourt may have already been lifeless, but something within her appeared to stir. Slowly, it seeped out, rising like invisible steam, as if it sought an escape into some distant darkness.

This caused the ambient light to dim, making the apartment's ceiling appear strangely ethereal. Lumian, Franca, and Browns all felt an uncanny sensation, as if they were under scrutiny.

It wasn't as if an actual gaze was directed at them; rather, it was as if they were the sole occupants of the entire building, with no obstructions to the crimson moonlight in the sky, which inevitably cast an eerie glow upon them.

Thump, thump. Lumian's heart raced.

The two Demonesses, skilled in divination, experienced an overwhelming sense of imminent danger.

With a sudden snap, a translucent boil of blood materialized on Beatrice Incourt's lifeless face, followed by a strange, tree-like wart with a brownish hue.

The wart burst open, oozing blood-colored pus, wet and sticky.

Wh— Lumian's pupils dilated, caught off guard by this turn of events.

Although he had taken the lives of more than a few members of the Bliss Society and had spent some time beside their corpses, he had never encountered anything like this. Death ended everything. How could a corpse cause an unsettling undercurrent to surge around it?

Even though Lumian didn't fully grasp the situation, he swiftly formulated a plan.

He glanced at the hazy, illusory ceiling and the faint movements within the walls. His intention was to step forward, seize Beatrice's lifeless body, and "teleport" to the Albert Mines, a place he had visited previously.

The deeper they ventured into the Fourth Epoch Trier's underground, the greater the peril. Various corruptive elements that led to a loss of control lurked there. Even with a corpse on the verge of mutation, it shouldn't pose a significant issue.

That place was inherently an amalgamation of problems!

Lumian planned to utilize Spirit World Traversal for a third time, returning to the surface and avoiding any danger by abandoning Beatrice's body.

While Lumian made his decision, Franca instinctively moved toward Beatrice's lifeless form, which now had a second tree-like wart.

Her right hand reached into the concealed pocket of her dress, aiming to retrieve the ancient mirror she had discovered underground.

This ancient mirror was connected to a strange and perilous mirror world. She could attempt to encase Beatrice's body within it, allowing one form of danger to counteract another!

This would buy them precious time for further deliberation. Ultimately, whether the departed believer of the Mother Tree of Desire triumphed or the enigmatic mirror world absorbed the corruption and "stilled" the mutation, it wouldn't directly impact Franca, the humans present, or the surrounding residents.

Compared to them, the inexperienced Browns Sauron's initial reaction was to incinerate the remnants of spirituality in the corpse with her black flames, freezing the emerging mutation. This was the most Demoness-like approach to disrupting the deteriorating situation.

At that very moment, Lumian and the others sensed a significant dimming of the light around them, as if the crimson moon had vanished, leaving only a few dim wall lamps.

Instinctively, Lumian turned his gaze to the window and discovered that the glass had turned pitch-black, no longer offering a view outside. It had transformed from a "window" into a sealed barrier.

Simultaneously, the formless entity that had been slowly emanating from Beatrice's body appeared lost, unable to find its path to the infinite darkness. It seemed to meander aimlessly, gradually receding.

Their mystical connection to an unknown entity dissipated. Lumian, Franca, and Browns suddenly lost the sense of being "watched" from afar and "illuminated" by unseen eyes.

Thud! Thud! Their heartbeats slowly returned to normal as they witnessed the tree-like wart on Beatrice's body wither rapidly, and no more blood boils emerged.

The darkness surrounding the corpse gradually receded, and an imperceptible object began attaching itself to the diamond necklace adorning Beatrice's corpse.

…

Beneath the crimson moonlight, the building at 23 Rue Ménier lay concealed in darkness. Every window remained void of light, with no signs of life to be found. It exuded an eerie stillness and a sense of foreboding, reminiscent of a haunted

house.

Across the street, within an apartment room, an unusual and ornate mirror rested in a spotless hand.

The mirror was adorned with intricately designed black serpents that intertwined. Each “snake” featured a large crimson eye on its head, devoid of a mouth or fangs.

In that precise moment, the mirror’s surface remained crystal clear, revealing a well-lit scene.

Gas wall lamps emitted a warm, yellowish radiance from the windows on every floor of the building, where various domestic scenes played out.

The elderly guard on the first floor smoked a cigarette butt he had collected and leaned against the lobby wall, savoring the tranquility of the night. On the second floor, a couple occupied the living room, one engrossed in a novel, the other unfolding a newspaper in front of them. Near an ajar window on the third floor, a half-naked man kept a cautious eye on the door, ready to make a hasty escape to the street at any moment…

Meanwhile, on the fourth floor, Lumian, Franca, and Browns found themselves perplexed. One contemplated using his abilities to discern an escape route from the “crime scene,” while another delved into a concealed pocket with her right hand, seemingly searching for something. The third member appeared to have a premonition and distanced themselves from the other two.

Another spotless hand extended and lightly grazed the peculiar mirror, encircled by the one-eyed “snakes.”

In an instant, the well-lit building disappeared from the mirror’s surface, and the silent, gloomy apartment at 23 Rue Ménier began to illuminate one by one. Figures were reflected one after another, and distant sounds could be heard.

…

Lumian surveyed the room and realized that Adaina’s apartment had returned to its usual state. The unsettling anomalies, like the impenetrable darkness and the strange glass windows, had all dissipated.

Beatrice Incourt’s corpse had reverted to its original form, and the horrific transformation now felt like a mere nightmare.

Lumian, who had been ready to whisk Franca away at a moment’s notice, relaxed somewhat and exchanged a look with Browns Sauron.

The Demoness Sect won’t just send such an inexperienced member to investigate Franca…

Had one of the powerful Demonesses, who had been covertly observing the situation, intervened to help resolve any potential anomalies?

This behavior doesn't seem characteristic of a Mid-Sequence Beyonder. A high-level Demoness, or a Sequence 5 Demoness of Affliction wielding a godhood item?

No wonder Browns had entered so openly, seemingly unconcerned about potential attacks from me and Franca.

I wonder if the hidden Demoness had seen my Spell of Harrumph…

Franca shared a similar thought. She diverted her attention from the window and regarded Browns Sauron.

She expressed her guess calmly but didn't inquire further. She looked down at Beatrice's corpse and asked with curiosity and confusion, "The necklace appears to have changed."

Lumian also noticed this transformation. The transparent diamond on the necklace seemed to reflect the light from the gas wall lamp in a captivating manner, causing his heart to race and his mouth to go dry.

Could it have become a Beyonder weapon similar to Fallen Mercury? Had the previous boons returned to their source because there were no abnormalities? Lumian formed a rough conjecture. He approached the corpse and knelt down cautiously.

As he reached out to touch the necklace, a multitude of desires surged uncontrollably, making him quickly retract his hand, shivering from the bloodlust.

With items like Flog and a host of contractual negative effects, he was no longer suitable for contact with the necklace, which had the power to awaken the deepest desires.

"You handle it," Lumian said, standing up and gesturing for Franca to take care of the necklace.

Franca accepted the task without hesitation and carefully removed the diamond necklace with anticipation.

Without further delay, the two of them bid farewell to Browns and made their way back to the market district.

…

Avenue du Marché.

Franca had successfully dealt with Beatrice and stood a chance of passing the Demonesses' audit. She had also acquired a Beyonder item that complemented the abilities of the Demoness of Pleasure. Her good mood was evident, and she almost hummed a tune to express her positive feelings.

She glanced at Lumian, who walked beside her in silence.

“What’s on your mind?”

“I’m wondering where Maipú Meyer might be hiding…” Lumian replied, his tone serious. “Let’s go underground now.”

Franca was taken aback for a moment but quickly understood Lumian’s thoughts.

“Do you think Maipú Meyer might return to the place where Susanna Mattise once conducted the sacrifice to the Tree of Shadow?”

“Perhaps.” Lumian wasn’t entirely certain, but he felt there might be some clues or traces left behind.

Franca, feeling confident in her gains from the spoils of war, didn’t attempt to dissuade him. Together with Lumian, they entered Underground Trier from the Avenue du Marché entrance.

Using a fireball for illumination, they navigated a relatively familiar path, passing by the collapsed mine where Rentas, a member of the Bliss Society, had been buried and the location where Jenna had been drugged. They ventured deeper into the altar area, a place they had previously avoided.

The area was marked with scorching signs, devoid of any living creatures or the malevolent aura that once lingered. It was as if it had been exposed to intense sunlight for days, leaving behind only piles of withered bones from various creatures.

The cave’s collapses and crevices had been filled with soil and rocks. Lumian examined the area carefully and noticed fresh marks around the original altar.

These marks clearly didn’t belong to the same person and came from different “visitors.”

As Lumian examined the marks and the deep-rooted cave-ins, memories of the Tree of Shadow, the Samaritan Women’s Spring, and the Iron and Blood Cross Order’s conspiracy flooded his mind.

These seemingly disparate elements all pointed to one thing: They, directly or indirectly, pointed to the underground, to the hidden histories and perils lurking beneath Trier.

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Chapter 421 - 421 Abnormal Silence

421 Abnormal Silence

Franca also noticed the footprints and traces. After carefully observing them for a while, she remarked, “At least four people have come together in the past two weeks…”

“Maipú Meyer has accomplices?”

Lumian gazed at the collapse that had been filled in and pondered for a moment before saying, “What’s more important isn’t whether they have accomplices, but what they’re doing here.

“If it’s truly Maipú Meyer and not a random team of cave explorers, he long knew that this place had been destroyed by the official Beyonders. There wouldn’t be anything valuable left behind. Why did he bring people here recently? To pay homage?”

“It’s not impossible,” Franca muttered. “What if he achieved something and received a new boon from the Mother Tree of Desire, becoming a Fallen Tree Spirit?

“It’s also known as Baby Cupid. There must be a distorted desire in affairs of the heart, just like Susanna Mattise did with Charlie. Therefore, Maipú Meyer coming specially to pay homage to his deceased love fits the characteristics of the pathway.”

“But there’s no need to bring three or four people to watch him perform, right?” Lumian surveyed his surroundings. “Perhaps he didn’t do it on purpose but just happened to pass by?”

Franca quickly caught Lumian’s drift.

“Are you suggesting that Maipú Meyer and his accomplices frequent the underground of the market district?”

Lumian offered a curt acknowledgment.

“I now believe that Maipú Meyer didn’t return to the market district to deal with me. He might eventually seek revenge, but that’s the outcome, not the process.”

“Is their target something underground in the market district?” Franca frowned. “But the Tree of Shadow is severely damaged. What’s so special about this place? It can’t be that the entrance to the Fourth Epoch Trier is beneath the market

district…”

Franca stopped abruptly.

That wasn’t impossible!

Lumian quickly recalled the situation in the market district and various rumors he knew. Suddenly, he recalled something.

Madam Magician’s “doll” messenger had a strong aversion to Salle de Bal Brise, claiming that old bones were buried beneath the area.

This had to refer to a unique situation beneath the market district. Moreover, the building facing Salle de Bal Brise was suspected to be related to église Saint-Robert’s old cemetery.

Lumian promptly shared this insight with Franca before they continued following the traces out of the destroyed sacrificial mine.

“There’s really a problem… It’s not hard to figure out. Summon that messenger later and ask,” Franca remarked, bemoaning the poor fengshui in the market district. She followed Lumian, providing mysticism support for his pursuit.

The two of them journeyed deeper underground, but they eventually lost the trail of their target. The suspected members of Maipú Meyer’s group had traversed several well-known and long-used tunnels frequented by cave explorers, smuggling caravans, and mushroom-growing citizens. Their tracks had been effectively concealed by those who came later after more than ten days.

Lumian, with a crimson fireball above him, came to a halt and stared into the pitch-black mine ahead. He remained silent for an extended moment, his thoughts shrouded in mystery.

Franca was about to suggest leaving when Lumian suddenly spoke.

“Don’t you think the market district has been unusually quiet for the past month or so?”

“How do you mean quiet?” Franca retorted involuntarily.

007 certainly didn’t think so!

Lumian pondered his words and continued, “Let me put it another way. Apart from the Beyonder problem we caused, isn’t the market district oddly quiet regarding mysticism incidents?

“No, to be more precise, after the Tree of Shadow was severely damaged, the heretics have become extremely inactive!

“Right, no new factions have emerged to devour the remaining smaller mobs, or to engage in conflicts with the Savoie Mob. There have been no suspected sacrificial

cases. Even among those that preach secretly, I only encountered a swindler from the Sick Church, and he was just an ordinary person…"

Since the Tree of Shadow incident, the only true heretics Lumian and Franca had encountered were Guillaume Bénet from the Sinners organization and Beatrice Incourt of the Bliss Society. However, they had followed a trail based on former clues which weren't within the market district.

The Rose School of Thought's Werewolf could barely be considered one, but that was an aftermath of the Tree of Shadow incident.

Browns Sauron of the Demoness Sect could only be considered half an element. This organization had a solid history and believed in the evil entity of this world, not alien evil gods."

Franca was taken aback.

"Isn't that normal? Secret organizations that believe in evil gods must operate in secret. If they were encountered by someone like you every day, they would have been wiped out long ago!

"Look, we didn't notice Maipú Meyer returning to the market district before."

If it were anyone else, your explanation wouldn't be a problem, but I have an alien evil god's angel sealed within me. According to Madam Magician's rubbish repulsion convergence theory, there must be an abnormal reason why I haven't encountered a heretic causing trouble for so long… Termiboros has been excessively quiet recently… Lumian's thoughts raced as he said to Franca, "Can you use dream divination on me to help me remember something?"

"No. Perhaps a powerful Seer can, but not me." Franca shook her head. "What do you want to recall? You can seek Madame Hela's help. She can definitely create a real dreamscape now."

Lumian nodded slowly and responded, "I'd like to recall an address where suspected heretics reside. I plan to check it out and see if they've vanished, gone into hiding, or fallen silent. Yes, there's no need to trouble Madame Hela for the time being. I know who to ask."

This was him carefully making confirmation built upon bold assumptions.

Seeing Lumian return to the surface as he spoke, Franca hurriedly asked, "What address? Who are you asking?"

"We'll talk later. Let's head to Rue de Scotch Broom in Quartier de Noel first," Lumian said without turning around.

Why does this address sound so familiar… Franca mused for a moment as she followed closely behind.

As she neared the surface, she finally remembered.

Madame Pualis's address!

Madame Night from Cordu!

…

Quartier de No?l, Rue de Scotch Broom.

This suburban area was filled with villa-like buildings, each with a lawn facing the street and a garden at the back.

Lumian walked in the shadows where the street lamps couldn't reach, carefully inspecting the lawns and gardens of each building.

Franca did the same. Without knowing Madame Pualis's house number, they had to rely on the unusually vigorous and lively plants to make a judgment.

As they approached the end of the street, Lumian and Franca simultaneously noticed a garden filled with blooming flowers, resembling a lush forest of plants.

The grayish-white building housing the garden appeared unlit, slumbering in the darkness, in stark contrast to the surrounding residences filled with family life.

"It feels like no one has lived here for a long time…" Franca began to understand Lumian's concerns. "Has Madame Pualis, a member of the Nightstalkers, also moved out and hidden herself quietly?"

Lumian observed and listened for a while to confirm that the building was empty. He then took out a piece of wire, opened the door, and entered.

During this process, Franca used Magic Mirror Divination to confirm via mysticism means.

The living room was devoid of furnishings, the linen long gone. Dust had gathered on the table, indicating that no one had lived there in some time.

Lumian proceeded further into the house, and Franca followed him cautiously, not daring to near or touch anything.

Upon reaching the coffee table, Lumian bent down and picked up an abandoned newspaper. Although it was tattered from rat bites, there were still some remnants left.

Lumian examined the newspaper under the moonlight and whispered, "Early July… This means that Madame Pualis didn't leave immediately after I got the address out from Louis Lund, nor did she depart immediately after the Tree of Shadow incident. She resided on Rue de Scotch Broom for a while and chose to abandon this place for unknown reasons."

"Something is indeed amiss," Franca noted with a grave expression.

They quickly searched the building and then boarded a rental carriage to their next destination.

Upon receiving an old newspaper advertising the Interstellar Bridge from Laurent, the former tenant of Auberge du Coq Doré and now deputy editor of Le Petit Trierien, Lumian and Franca arrived at 9 Rue Saint-Martin in Quartier 2.

The fifth floor was an office rented by a group of swindlers and suspected heretics. They aimed to raise funds for constructing an interstellar bridge to the crimson moon.

Under the dim starlight, the entire fifth floor lay shrouded in darkness.

Lumian cautiously reached out and pushed open the door to the apartment-like office.

Crimson moonlight filtered through the window, revealing scattered papers on the ground. Complex mechanical symbols and intricate bridge diagrams displayed concepts that appeared both imaginative and plausible.

Many of the drawers were open, devoid of any belongings, as if the swindlers had hastily retreated upon realizing the arrival of the police.

Based on the written information and various traces at the scene, Lumian and Franca concluded that this floor had been vacant for nearly two weeks.

“There’s definitely something unusual,” Franca remarked. “Why have the heretics from various organizations suddenly reduced their activities, hidden themselves, and gone quiet?”

Lumian’s expression grew solemn as he said in a deep voice, “This abnormality suggests that something significant might be in the works.”

Without waiting for Franca’s response, he instructed her, “Contact 007 and inquire about any information regarding the Sick Church. Also, find out what problems might be lurking in église Saint-Robert’s old cemetery.

“I’ll write a letter to Madam Magician and share our findings and speculations.”

He planned to also ask the “doll” messenger about the meaning of the old bones.

“Alright,” Franca responded promptly.

…

Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 207.

Lumian set up the ritual and summoned the “doll” messenger donning a light-gold dress.

As he handed the folded letter to her, he managed a smile and inquired, “What did you mean by the old bones underground?”

The “doll” messenger displayed a disgusted expression.

“Filthy, repulsive old bones from the Fourth Epoch!”

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Chapter 422 - 422 Formula

422 Formula

Old bones from the Fourth Epoch… Lumian disregarded the doll messenger's emotional descriptions and focused on extracting the essential information.

But this didn't provide a deeper insight compared to what he already knew. After all, most of Trier's underground issues had their roots in the Fourth Epoch.

Lumian took a moment to ponder and inquired, "Where does it come from? How do the old bones look like?"

The messenger responded angrily, "I've never seen them before! Their aura alone is so repulsive, disgusting, and filthy!"

So, you're not entirely sure of the situation either… Lumian decided not to press the "doll" messenger further and observed as she vanished, carrying the neatly folded letter.

Only then, as Lumian awaited Madam Magician's response, did he have the opportunity to assess his gains from the night.

A vial of truth serum, a vial of Bliss Society sedatives, a vial of Mysticism Smelling Salts, and 1,500 verl d'or.

…

Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

"So late? I thought you'd resolve it quickly." Jenna, clad in a light cotton dress, stood up and greeted Franca upon her return.

She believed that Franca and Ciel had a high chance of winning, even if they encountered a Fallen Tree Spirit!

Franca muttered, "We ran into an accident. Uh, just a moment."

Franca looked at Jenna with a serious expression.

"What's wrong?" Jenna sensed something was amiss.

Franca walked to her side and examined her pupils.

There were no signs of her wearing blue contact lenses!

“Phew…” Franca let out a sigh of relief and said, “In the future, we need to continuously verify if we’re Actors in disguise.”

Actors of the Mother Tree of Desire pathway couldn’t alter their bodies or fundamentally change their appearances like Faceless. They relied more on makeup items and various props.

Among these, the color of the eyes was the most challenging for Actors to mimic. They had to use external objects. They could prevent Actors from infiltrating their ranks by checking if anyone around them was wearing colored contact lenses.

Of course, this wasn’t foolproof. They could always find actors with the same eye color as the target to act.

In the current situation, Maipú Meyer’s eyes were dark brown, Jenna’s were blue, and Lumian’s were the same. Franca’s were a lighter shade, more akin to the blue of a serene lake. For the time being, they had no reason to worry about being impersonated by the former manager of Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons. Maipú Meyer had distanced himself from the Bliss Society, and he couldn’t recruit a new Actor anytime soon.

The only person they needed to be concerned about was Anthony Reid, who also had a pair of dark brown eyes.

As an acting apprentice at Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, Jenna was particularly attuned to the Bliss Society’s activities. She instantly became alert and scrutinized Franca’s eyes, fear in her voice as she asked, “Are they targeting the market district again?”

“It’s Maipú Meyer. He’s back in the market district. We don’t know where he’s hiding,” Franca replied without reservation, recounting the entire incident.

Of the Bliss Society members, the only one Jenna was familiar with was Maipú Meyer. She had a deep-seated fear of him because he had once been her manager and could influence her future.

Unconsciously, she touched the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty concealed in her pocket and nodded solemnly, saying, “I’ll be cautious.”

Franca didn’t offer any additional information. She glanced at the wall clock and retreated to her room. She activated the radio transceiver and prepared to contact 007.

Before long, she used the mechanical typewriter and analyzer to send a telegram.

“007, paging 007!”

Within 20 to 30 seconds, a telegram produced by a machine appeared.

“Hidden Blade, don’t do this to me. I’m scared. What’s going on now?”

“This could be a significant problem!” Franca honestly warned 007. “Bro, before I disclose the exact situation, help me gather some information. I need to confirm two things: First, if there have been any developments related to the Malady God faith in Quartier du Jardin Botanique, specifically on Rue Pasteur and Rue Evelyn. Second, what lies deep beneath the old cemetery of église Saint-Robert?”

After a brief pause, a new telegram arrived.

“I’m off-duty tonight, seriously! And now I have to go back to work overtime!

“Give me half an hour to an hour.”

Franca replied: “No problem.” As she conversed with other members of the telegram group, she retrieved the diamond necklace she had acquired from Beatrice Incourt and used various methods to assess the Beyonder accessory’s capabilities and adverse effects.

The diamond corresponds to a total of five desires: lust, appetite, lust, acting, and fulfillment…

It doesn’t seem to have many uses. Usage of each desire shouldn’t exceed two…

With it on, I seem to be better at acting and makeup…

I’ll just keep it in my pocket. Without it coming into direct contact with my skin or flesh, there won’t be any negative effects…

After wearing it, I’ll become more excited than usual, and my various desires will significantly increase. If I encounter Beyonders with similar abilities, I’ll be effectively restrained and even suffer a huge loss…

Among them, the most intense desire is the desire for recognition…

Yes, this thing can’t be used against Beyonders of the Mother Tree of Desire pathway. Its weakness lies in their strengths…

What should I call it? The Seven Emotions and Six Desires Pendant? Uh, the style doesn’t seem right. Forget it, I’ll call it Beatrice’s Necklace. It’s simple, convenient, and clear!

007’s response arrived faster than Franca had anticipated. In less than half an hour, he provided the relevant information.

“According to the heretic database shared by various official factions, the Malady God’s envoy hasn’t been located. He appears to have sensed danger in advance and hasn’t resurfaced.

“The situation at église Saint-Robert’s old cemetery is extremely classified. I can’t investigate it for the time being.”

Extremely classified? Franca inwardly hissed and relayed to 007 the eerie quietness from organizations devoted to evil gods.

…

Rue Anarchie, Auberge du Coq Doré.

Madam Magician's slow response arrived after an hour of waiting:

"After the death of a bestowed, the return of power to the source is deducible, but typically, you wouldn't be able to sense it.

"This time, it was due to your wearing the Flog boxing gloves. They are made from the Tree of Shadow and are closely related to the one that the Bliss Society believes in, the source of the boon powers. Therefore, when Beatrice's boon power returned and the connection was strengthened, that entity indirectly noticed you and the Two of Cups, which caused the corpse to exhibit an abnormality. This abnormality allowed the flow of the boon power to become visible.

"To retain the boon power and prevent it from returning, you require the corresponding ability or a unique environment. Sometimes, these two elements are one and the same. In simple terms, you need to advance to Sequence 4 and become a demigod or obtain something at this level. Only then can you have a chance of preserving the remaining boon's power and forming a Beyonder item. Of course, in specific underground environments, such as near the Samaritan Women's Spring, you can achieve this without a high Sequence."

Lumian now had a clear understanding of the anomaly of the night.

Unlike his previous killings of members of the Bliss Society, he now possessed the Flog boxing gloves, bringing about a different development.

The use of the Flog boxing gloves attracted the attention of hidden entities to begin with, and its connection to the Mother Tree of Desire through Beatrice's belief had influenced the return of boon power, causing the abnormality.

Understanding the situation and how to prevent it in the future, Lumian continued reading Madam Magician's reply.

"We have already noticed Trier's anomaly and are monitoring one of the leads. However, it is unclear when we will find any answers. What we can say for certain is that changes will occur, with a timeframe ranging from as short as two months to as long as half a year.

"I cannot provide a definitive answer regarding what lies beneath Salle de Bal Brise as it is challenging for me to approach. All I can tell you is that it is certainly more than just the corruption left behind by Blood Emperor Alista Tudor.

"Don't dwell too much on this matter. It is beyond your capabilities to handle. Your focus should be on accumulating strength and biding your time."

Accumulate strength and bide my time… Lumian repeated these words to himself as he absorbed the advice.

The next morning, Lumian had a conversation with Franca and Jenna. Afterward, he gathered all his funds and went directly to 11 Rue des Fontaines in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.

“Boss, here are 30,000 gold and 30,000 verl d’or banknotes,” Lumian said with a smile as he placed the heavy leather bag on Gardner Martin’s desk.

He still had 1,000 gold and nominal funds of 1,500 verl d’or.

Gardner Martin glanced at Lumian, unzipped the bag, and began counting the money.

He didn’t inquire about Lumian’s remaining funds. With a smile, he retrieved a faux goatskin that appeared to have been prepared in advance.

“You need to promise two things. First, memorize this formula before burning the piece of paper. Second, you cannot resell the Conspirer potion formula without my or the Supervisor’s permission,” Gardner Martin stated these terms without requesting a notarized pledge, as if issuing an order.

Lumian agreed to these terms without hesitation, saying, “No problem.”

Gardner Martin nodded in satisfaction and handed over the faux goatskin to Lumian.

Lumian took it and began reading:

“Conspirer potion formula:

“Main ingredient: Black Hunting Spider’s composite eye, Sphinx’s brain;

“Supplementary ingredients: One Black Hunting Spider’s poison gland, 80 milliliters of Sphinx blood, 10 grams of amber powder, and two white oak fruits.”

After reading and memorizing the formula, Lumian’s right hand trembled, allowing the crimson flames to engulf the faux goatskin.

…

Time passed in an eerie silence. Unbeknownst to them, the heat in Trier began to wane, and the temperature gradually dropped.

One mid-September day, Franca stood before the window of Apartment 601 and cursed Browns Sauron for what felt like the hundredth time.

She had already passed the Demoness Sect’s audit and informed Browns that she had joined the Savoie Mob to infiltrate the Iron and Blood Cross Order. However,

she never anticipated there would be an assessment period. Only after this evaluation could she officially become a member of the Demoness Sect.

Her current liaison, Browns Sauron, used this as an excuse to prevent her from participating in the Red House Café's female orgies. This left her with no option but to endure tormenting Gardner Martin and his lovers for the past month or so.

Franca turned her attention to Jenna, who appeared lost in thought, and couldn't help but sigh at her companion's fortune.

The Demoness Sect remained oblivious to Jenna's true identity as a Beyonder of the Assassin pathway.

"What's troubling you?" Franca inquired.

Jenna responded with a hint of distress, "My Instigator potion has completely digested."

Franca exclaimed in pleasant surprise, "That's a good thing!"

Jenna scratched her head and let out a sigh. "I haven't even paid you back for the money I owe you, and now I have to consider the Witch potion formula and its ingredients. Dammit, why does it feel like the more I advance, the poorer I become?"

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Chapter 423 - 423 Unexpected Encounter

423 Unexpected Encounter

Franca chuckled at Jenna's complaint and replied, "That's typical. As long as you master the acting method, progress comes quickly before reaching the mid Sequences. The pace at which you save money often falls short of the expenses for purchasing the potion formula and the necessary ingredients.

Jenna fell silent for a moment, then she swore, "You instigated me without using your abilities!"

"Haha, it's just the way things are. I'll share the Witch potion formula with you now. Let's start gathering," Franca said as she returned to the coffee table, spread out a piece of paper, and swiftly jotted down the instructions.

Jenna stood beside her, examining the Intisian words taking shape.

Meanwhile, Jenna silently tallied her debts.

Including the Purifier reward and the earnings from my underground singing, I've saved nearly 10,000 verl d'or.

According to Franca and Ciel, a Sequence 7 potion formula can go for between 30,000 and 40,000 verl d'or, depending on its rarity. At the very least, I owe Franca another 30,000 verl d'or, bringing the total to 60,000…

Even if I sell the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty, I won't be able to make up for it. In the future, I'll have to purchase various ingredients for the Witch potion, costing me over 30,000 verl d'or… Dammit! It's no wonder why so many Beyonders at those mysticism gatherings seem strapped for cash and penny-pinching!

The more Jenna calculated, the more her head throbbed.

If it weren't for the potion's tangible transformation and the clear, visible abilities it grants, she would have suspected she'd fallen into a scam. Why did her debts keep increasing as she worked harder?

In the past, her whole family had often felt hopeless when dealing with a debt of a few thousand verl d'or. But now, she owed Franca 60,000, and there was no end in sight.

Even with her cash and assets, she still fell short by 10,000 verl d'or.

Gritting her teeth, Jenna decided to put these worries aside for now and deal with them after advancing to Sequence 7 as a Witch.

Franca quickly finished writing down the Witch potion formula:

“Sequence 7: Witch;

“Main ingredient: Every drop of an Abyss Demonic Fish’s blood and an Agate Peacock’s egg;

“Supplementary ingredients: 80 ml of purified water, five drops of Jimsonweed juice, 3 scales of a Shadow Lizard, and 10 drops of Daffodil Juice.”

She handed the paper with the formula to Jenna and added in thought, “Avoid gathering these materials at the mysticism gathering we attend. Acquire them from the gathering you discovered and joined, as well as from the Purifiers. Oh, ask Ciel for assistance too.”

Franca was still in the Demoness Sect’s assessment period and worried about potential spies from the secret organization in the mysticism gatherings. If participants gathered the ingredients for the Witch potion, it could raise suspicions.

In contrast, the Purifiers were a more secure source of these ingredients, given their history of dealing with Demonesses. They definitely had the corresponding characteristics in reserve.

“Alright.” Jenna rwas well aware of the Demoness Sect’s hostility toward wild Assassins like her.

Recognizing that the heretics were oddly quiet and them receiving confirmation from a Major Arcana card holder, Lumian and Franca had suggested that Jenna and her brother Julien relocate from Trier to another city in Intis for six months to monitor the situation.

Jenna had insisted on staying to spend time with her comrades and had promised to advance her Sequence quickly.

This was the primary reason she had accepted Franca’s gift without hesitation.

As for her brother Julien, Jenna genuinely wanted to keep him away from another mysticism disaster. She wanted him to live a safe and happy life, and she had been busy instigating him to leave Trier.

Jenna couldn’t help but smile. “I went to Port LeSeur last weekend.”

Port LeSeur, situated at the estuary of the Srenzo River, was one of Trier’s primary ports for shipping goods out to sea.

Franca was surprised and pleased for her friend.

“Did you manage to instigate that stubborn fellow?”

Without divulging the truth,Jenna shook her head and said, “No. I shifted my instigation efforts to a different target. I discovered that the shipyard where Julien works has a branch in Port LeSeur, so I used my Instigation ability to convince their supervisor to propose a six-month technical exchange program between the factories. I also paid to include Julien in the list.

“I only digested the potion after successfully instigating this. Dogsh*t, no matter what I told Julien, he refused to listen. He even reneged on his word the next day after the Instigation. As soon as his supervisor issued the order, he started packing!”

After venting her frustration about her brother, Jenna glanced at Franca and added with a sly grin,

“The skilled workers from Trier arrived in Port LeSeur last weekend. The return leg from LeSeur to Trier will be half a year later to avoid the potential disaster.

“Franca, why don’t we figure out a way to get more people to leave Trier and lay low for a while?”

“They won’t believe us even if we tell them,” Franca sighed. “Moreover, if more people leave, those evil god organizations might sense it and act prematurely. If the official Beyonders aren’t prepared, it could lead to more casualties.”

Unspoken was the fact that, combined with Madam Judgment’s words and Ciel’s intel, the surface Trier served to seal the underground Trier. Everyone in the city contributed their strength, and if too many left, the seal might weaken, putting the remaining citizens in danger.

Jenna fell silent for a moment, choosing not to dwell on the topic.

Her upbringing and six months of experience had taught her to accept the harsh reality. All she could do was save as many as she could within reasonable bounds.

After a pause of about ten seconds, Jenna said thoughtfully, “When I Instigated the supervisor to propose the exchange program, I noticed that many neighboring factories had similar arrangements. That’s why I had an example to raise and succeeded without much difficulty.

“Now that I think about it, could it be a covert effort by official Beyonders to reduce the population in the market district?”

“It’s certainly possible,” Franca considered for a moment before hesitating to add more.

What she wanted to say was that it might also be orchestrated by the Tarot Club or Church of The Fool. Madam Justice, a Major Arcana card in the Spectator domain, was well-suited for such matters.

Franca refrained from saying this because she hadn't yet told Jenna about her and Ciel's belief in Mr. Fool.

She had initially planned to "visit" The Fool's cathedral at Lavigny Docks with Jenna, but she dared not do so once she came under the scrutiny of the Demoness Sect.

…

In a four-wheeled four-seater carriage, navigating through the forest and farmland, Lumian, dressed in a casual formal suit, looked out the window at the golden harvest, his mind drifting.

The past month had been his most leisurely period in the past six months, but he didn't find this leisure enjoyable. He seized every opportunity to digest the Pyromaniac potion.

This included visits to the large morgue in the island district to help "cremate" corpses, "bury" abandoned large-sized trash, venturing underground to use flames to intimidate passing smuggling teams, successfully securing insurance compensation for small distressed merchants through fires, tracking down and incinerating a few wanted criminals, and igniting a desire among many to leave Trier and explore opportunities in neighboring cities…

This string of actions had brought Lumian to the brink of fully digesting the Pyromaniac potion. It might only take another half a month, a week, or perhaps even less.

Today, Lumian had received an invitation from Count Poufer to visit his Red Swan Castle as a guest.

Over the past month, the Sauron family had hosted five gatherings—one at the castle, one for hunting, two for casual chats at a café, and one for a masquerade ball in an abandoned house.

Lumian had participated in all of them, but nothing significant had occurred. The only notable exception was that Poufer Sauron hadn't played King's Pie again.

Where's the probe Gardner Martin mentioned? Could it be a probe this time? The Cave Association hasn't made another appearance. Do they believe me? He redirected his thoughts from the near-harvest farmland and contemplated the invitation for the day.

What intrigued him even more was Gardner Martin's promise to secretly monitor every gathering hosted by Count Poufer. So, where might Gardner be concealed at this moment?

Under the afternoon sun, the carriage arrived at its destination.

Lumian gazed up at the beige castle, tainted with the stains of ancient blood. Passing through the imposing door and the vast atrium, he reached the elegant living room on the first floor, adorned with a dark-red, plush carpet.

Poufer Sauron, dressed in a red velvet coat, was engaged in conversation at the entrance with another guest when Lumian arrived.

Lumian's gaze froze.

The guest standing beside Count Poufer was not someone he had expected to see.

Clad in hunting attire, with what appeared to be reddish-dyed hair, sharp brown eyebrows, and piercing eyes, it was Albus, another member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

As a member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order under the command of Commanding Officer Gardner Martin, Lumian was well aware of their identities and objectives. However, Albus was enigmatic and seldom seen in the market district, only making appearances at gatherings for a free meal.

"Who is this?" Lumian didn't conceal his confusion.

Is he here to assist me in completing my mission?

Poufer Sauron introduced with a smile,"A new friend. He'll be joining us at our gatherings more frequently."

At this point, Poufer turned to Albus, whose expression appeared rather unlikable, maintaining his smile.

"His full name is: Albus Medici."

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Chapter 424 - 424 Underground Maze

424 Underground Maze

Albus Medici… Lumian repeated the name to himself, glancing at the member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order who had suddenly appeared.

During Gardner Martin's gathering, Albus had never revealed his last name, and Gardner Martin had never introduced him. Now, he had actually given his full name to Poufer Sauron.

Is he trying to make it more realistic? Lumian's gaze swept across Albus's face, and he realized that when Count Poufer mentioned the surname Medici, he didn't hide his mockery at all, as if mocking the Sauron family member.

"Ciel Dubois," Lumian extended his right hand and politely introduced himself.

Albus casually shook his hand, a smile evident in his eyes.

He said, "I've heard your name before, a generous patron of art."

The member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order emphasized "generous."

"That's mainly thanks to my sponsor," Lumian said with a double entendre.

In the ears of the other guests, he was referring to his father—his wealthy family. As a member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, Albus caught the subtle message.

Poufer Sauron exchanged a few pleasantries with Lumian before escorting him to the sofa.

The gathering was intimate, with familiar faces all around, including Poufer's cousin, Elros, Novelist Anori, Painter Mullen, Critic Ernst Young, and Poet Iraeta.

After some casual conversation and nibbling on snacks accompanied by black tea, Count Poufer glanced around and suggested with a mischievous smile, "How about we embark on an adventure today?"

"Adventure?" Albus raised an eyebrow and couldn't resist a playful quip, "An adventure in the bedroom?"

His insinuation was clear. Red Swan Castle might be spacious, with room for a key family member and even hundreds of soldiers at its zenith, but it hardly seemed like a place fit for adventure. Were they supposed to reenact a Trier-like adventure under a bedroom's plush sheets?

The jest lightened the atmosphere, and Poufer Sauron cleared his throat before continuing,

“Perhaps you’re unaware, but Red Swan Castle harbors an extensive underground area.

“In the era of its construction, its primary function was war. It had to boast a cavernous cellar and a tunnel for escape during dire situations, or it would be deemed inadequate.

“Throughout the centuries, my forebears expanded and modified the underground, turning it into a labyrinth resembling something out of a horror story. Even though I grew up in Red Swan Castle, my knowledge of that place is limited to the areas I frequently use.

“Our objective today is to venture deep into this subterranean maze and locate a Count’s crown that one of my ancestors misplaced in one of its chambers. The crown is adorned with numerous rubies, making it easily distinguishable.

“The one who retrieves the Count’s crown will be crowned today’s king.”

Deep into the underground maze… Scenes suddenly flashed through Lumian’s mind.

The constant self-mutilating people in Red Swan Castle…

Screams of unknown origin…

A bronze coffin, surrounded by countless white candles…

A palm with dark-red, nearly-black blood vessels…

And a withered, black heart with a trickle of crimson seeping out…

These latter objects seemed to be concealed somewhere in the depths of the underground hall!

In an instant, Lumian comprehended the gravity of Poufer Sauron’s proposal.

Poufer Sauron’s probing was here!

Suppressing the urge to scan his surroundings and possibly catch a glimpse of Gardner Martin, who might be lurking, Lumian turned his attention to Albus Medici.

The member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order clicked his tongue and chuckled.

“Sounds intriguing. This is a game for the courageous!”

As if to quell any doubts or reluctance among the group, doing so meant: Those who decline to participate are merely cowards!

Count Poufer seized the opportunity to reassure them, “Worry not. If you lose your way and cannot find your path back, just pull the bell rope in your chamber. The servants will be dispatched to search for you and bring you back from below.”

“No problem,” Anori, the short and plump novelist, quipped with a mischievous glint in his eye. “I’m quite looking forward to something happening. After all, it will provide me with excellent material for my writing.”

“Like Anori’s Last Day?” Lumian joked.

Having attended numerous gatherings hosted by the Black Cat art organization, Lumian was well aware of Novelist Anori and Poet Iraeta’s unique quirks. Anori had a taboo for never praising fellow authors, while Iraeta’s ire was only stirred by the current social realities in Intis.

Anori took a sip of his black tea and mumbled, “Those old fogeys from the Intis Faculty of Arts will absolutely love this theme.”

Seeing no objections, Count Poufer rose from his seat and addressed the assembled guests,

“Let’s divide into two groups and begin this adventure. We’ll set out individually along the way.

“One group will follow me, and the other will accompany Ciel. These individuals have all been kings in the past three months.

“Those willing to join Ciel, raise your hands.”

“Me!” Albus Medici was the first to raise his hand. Lumian had expected him to follow Poufer Sauron closely to complete the Iron and Blood Cross Order’s mission.

Count Poufer appeared unfazed, as if this was the anticipated course of events.

The second to raise her hand was Elros, the cousin of the host.

With her long auburn hair, soft features, and bright brown eyes, she smiled at Lumian and said, “I’ve always been Monsieur Ciel’s companion in the past. I see no reason to change that now.”

Lumian nodded and returned her smile.

He was aware that beneath her youthful appearance, Elros possessed a complexity that belied her innocence.

In one of his unsettling dreams, most participants in the King's Pie game had descended into madness, inflicting self-harm or harm on others. Only three individuals remained unaffected: Lumian himself, Poufer Sauron, and Miss Elros.

Lumian couldn't help but wonder about her true motivations for choosing to accompany him into the underground maze.

The third to raise his hand was the poet, Iraeta.

Holding his cherrywood pipe, he offered a straightforward reason, "He's my sponsor!"

The remaining guests, including Novelist Anori, Painter Mullen, and Critic Ernst Young, formed a team with Poufer Sauron.

They left the comfort of the living room and found themselves standing next to a fully-armored statue. Descending the nearby stairs, designed for two people to walk side by side, they ventured further into the depths of the castle.

The walls of the staircase were mottled and grayish-white, winding their way down into the bowels of the earth. The surroundings grew increasingly quiet as they descended.

After traversing about three floors, Lumian and his group reached the entrance of the underground maze.

The passageways were illuminated by numerous wall lamps, some connected to gas pipes, while others had a more classical design with candles burning brightly.

Lumian gazed up at the ceiling and noticed the aqueous-black stone bricks above, shrouded in darkness. Their cracks were distinct, and the surface exhibited signs of peeling.

"Let's choose this one," Poufer declared, taking a carbide lamp from the wall and leading his team down the leftmost passageway.

After setting up the carbide lamp, Lumian instinctively proceeded down the corridor ahead without hesitation.

He believed that in such an environment, methodical searching might cause them to overlook something significant. By relying on the convergence of Beyonder characteristics and the concealed Blood Emperor aura, he believed he would stumble upon something of value.

"What's your reason for choosing this path?" Albus Medici's expression was always a little annoying.

Lumian responded with a hint of nonchalance, "I have faith in fate."

"I like that reason," Elros chimed in with a faint smile.

Poet Iraeta took a puff from his cherrywood pipe and added, “I believe in it too, but only if fate is inclined to favor me.”

The quartet ventured deeper into the corridor, encountering what appeared to be storage rooms along the way.

Soon, they arrived at a dimly lit hall with three doors, each bearing a single word in ancient Feysac: Hope, Death, and Madness.

Lumian had abandoned deep thinking by this point. Without hesitation, he walked towards the Door of Madness and gently pushed it open.

As the door swung ajar, darkness enveloped the room, and the light from the carbide lamp spilled in, revealing an eerie sight. Lifelike wax statues stood throughout the room, both men and women, adorned in either ordinary or exquisite attire, their expressions twisted in agony.

“Not bad,” Albus commented, disdainfully patting a wax statue’s face with his right hand.

Elros glanced at him.

“Didn’t your mother teach you manners?”

Albus chuckled.

“I don’t have a mother.”

Elros was momentarily taken aback, not quite sure how to respond to that statement.

In the background, Poet Iraeta spoke with a touch of admiration, “In the past, when rumors circulated about me having an affair with a widow, I’d quietly spread gossip that I had kidnapped the Member of Parliament’s daughter and was suspected of murdering a merchant. I even found myself entangled in rumors involving human meat pies, and my neighbors mysteriously vanished.

“As long as I don’t care about my reputation and actively tarnish it, no one can perch on the moral high ground and point fingers at me.”

As expected of a poet… Lumian praised inwardly. Holding the carbide lamp, he led the way through the room filled with wax statues, their goal being the exit at the far end.

The wax figures, illuminated by the dim yellowish light of the gas wall lamps, appeared unnervingly lifelike. Their eyes seemed to follow Lumian and his companions, creating an unsettling and bizarre atmosphere.

Lumian couldn’t shake the memory of the previous wax statues that had come to life and attacked. He couldn’t help but feel that any of these figures could

suddenly spring to life and lunge at them.

Breaking the indescribable silence, Albus Medici

spoke in a relaxed tone, addressing Elros, “You’re Poufer’s cousin. Your last name isn’t Sauron, is it?”

Elros candidly admitted, “You’re right.”

Albus casually inquired, “Which family do you belong to?”

Elros turned her head to look at Albus Medici and then at Lumian. She replied with a smile, “My full name is: Elros Einhorn.”

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Chapter 425 - 425 The Living

425 The Living

Einhorn? Even though Lumian was a young man deprived of an education, he had received Aurore's rigorous education and knew that this last name represented the royal family of the Feysac Empire in the north.

It was worth noting that more than a thousand years had passed since the establishment of the Feysac Empire in the late Fourth Epoch. The Einhorn family had always held the throne, while the Sauron family had lost the Intis throne nearly two centuries ago. It was clear which family held the upper hand.

Albus Medici glanced at Elros in surprise and added a touch of provocation to his words, "You're an Einhorn? I couldn't tell."

Elros gazed straight ahead, returning to her obedient demeanor.

She spoke emotionlessly, "The Sauron family and the Einhorn family often formed marriage alliances. Even though the Sauron family has long left the Intis throne, this tradition endures. My mother just happened to marry a member of the Einhorn royal family."

Poet Iraeta asked with interest, "So your last name is Einhorn. Why did you come to Trier? You were living in Red Swan Castle when I first met Count Poufer."

"Six years ago, my father perished in the war between the Feysac Empire and the Loen Kingdom. My mother brought me back to Trier, where we stayed with my maternal grandfather, who also happened to be Poufer's grandfather," Elros explained with a soft sigh. "Two years ago, my maternal grandfather passed away. Last year, my mother succumbed to illness."

The frequency of death does seem remarkably high? Right, Aurore had mentioned that while the four powerful countries of the Northern Continent sometimes collaborated and at other times clashed, marriages between the royal family and nobles never ceased. Consequently, cousin marriages had become frequent… According to Franca, the Hunter pathway has mainly been in the hands of the Sauron and Einhorn families. Could a Hunter-Hunter marriage guarantee that future generations would be better suited for the Hunter pathway? Lumian held the carbide lamp and proceeded down the corridor toward the exit of the wax statue's room.

The wax statues on either side, bathed in the yellowish glow of the carbide lamp, seemed eerily lifelike.

As they ventured further down the corridor, it grew narrower, and the wax statues almost obstructed their path.

Lumian couldn't help but bump into them. Their bodies were cold, and their limbs felt stiff. They were indeed genuine wax statues.

Finally, the four of them reached the end of the room and opened the iron-black wooden door.

Just as Lumian was about to depart, a subconscious impulse made him glance back.

In the dimly lit room, the pained expressions on the wax statues' faces appeared haunting, as if their eyes were fixed on the exit.

Lumian was reminded of his earlier encounter with the wax statue in the river. He instinctively raised his wrist slightly and discreetly extended the middle finger toward the wax statue in the room.

"I really wish I could set this place on fire," Albus Medici lamented with a touch of regret.

Lumian was momentarily surprised, but he secretly concurred.

Good idea!

He had a suspicion that if he could incinerate these wax statues, the potion would be fully digested.

Elros Einhorn remarked calmly, "Red Swan Castle experiences an average of three fires a month."

The passageway descended diagonally, leading them deeper underground.

The four of them continued down until the corridor leveled out once more.

The wall lamps were not lit. Whether gas or candles, they slumbered in the darkness.

With the yellowish glow of their four carbide lamps, Lumian discerned a room at a diagonal angle ahead, its wooden door slightly ajar. A faint, lingering odor of blood emanated from within.

He approached and pushed open the wooden door.

Light streamed into the room, and the scene within was cast upon the eyes of Lumian, Albus, and the rest of the group.

It was a small bedroom, but time had not been kind to it. The bed had crumbled, the wood decayed, and the table lay in ruins. A collection of assorted items lay

scattered in the center of the room.

The walls bore vivid, deep gouges, as if they had been violently clawed at by someone until their fingers must have bled and rotted.

The blood, having seeped into the crevices, had oxidized over time, turning black. Its original appearance was lost, but a faint cloyed odor still lingered.

Then, a whistle reached Lumian's ears.

Albus Medici expressed his emotions through this sound.

He moved past Lumian, entering the room, and ran his fingers along the deep scratches on the wall.

"I can only imagine the horrifying sounds that were produced," the chubby-faced Elros commented, her focus on the matter somewhat off.

Lumian surmised that someone from Red Swan Castle had once descended into madness and been confined in this room. The marks on the wall were the haunting legacy of their torment.

After a cursory search that yielded no findings, they pressed on.

They opted for the right path at the three-way intersection, leading them to a room with its wooden door partially open.

Inside, the room was in shambles, marred by the presence of the blackened bloodstains. The walls appeared to be adorned with what could only be described as decaying flesh.

Albus Medici observed it and let out a disapproving click of his tongue.

"A guy exploded here. From the inside out. Blood and flesh splattered everywhere."

Lumian nodded almost imperceptibly. The judgment aligned with his.

Could it have been the result of a Pyromaniac losing control and meeting their end?

Poet Iraeta, holding a carbide lamp in one hand, took a puff from his cherrywood pipe, struggling slightly, and offered his own perspective.

"I can't quite fathom why such a tragedy unfolded, but there's a certain poetic quality to it."

Is an explosion a form of art? Lumian muttered as he entered the room and began his search.

The putrid blood and decaying flesh seemed to exude an aura that could influence one's mental state.

After moving forward for over ten meters, the group discovered another room adjacent to the corridor, its wooden door partially open.

The room didn't reek of blood, but Lumian felt as if sharp blades were pressed against his skin, causing his hair to stand on end.

Sharpness!

That was the word that naturally came to his mind.

As the light from the carbide lamp illuminated the room, Lumian, Elros, and the rest observed that the furniture had been reduced to tiny fragments. Beds and desks lay in finger-sized squares, partially collapsed.

"Remarkable swordsmanship," Albus Medici remarked with a chuckle.

Lumian wasn't too concerned with this matter. What troubled him was that this place was unlike the previous two rooms, which had signs of decaying blood and rotting flesh.

Where had the person who once occupied this room disappeared to? Lumian scrutinized the area intently before deciding to move on.

Shortly, they reached a descending stone staircase. The lower portion of the staircase was enveloped in darkness, seemingly endless.

On either side of the stairs were rooms with slightly open wooden doors. The interior of these rooms was pitch-black, as though it could swallow all light and motion.

Lumian instinctively chose the left side, pushed open the door, and extended the carbide lamp into the room.

Bathed in the direct yellow light, an intact bed, an undamaged table, and a chair all stood in perfect order.

Two gleaming, cold swords adorned the wall before them. On the table, a pile of colorful building blocks of various shapes and a row of iron soldiers, each as tall as a candle, were neatly arranged.

These iron soldiers were clad in blue coats with golden embroidery. They wielded spears that resembled tree branches or black rifles, a popular toy in Intis that had enjoyed popularity for a century or two.

Lumian walked over and placed the carbide lamp down. He picked up one of the iron soldiers and adeptly twisted the torsion spring on its back.

With a series of creaking sounds, the iron soldier sprang to life, swaying forward while raising its spear.

Memories of owning a set of such iron soldiers during his youth, before his mother's illness and his pépé's financial troubles, flooded into Lumian's mind.

"There are no signs of damage here. It's as if it contains items from childhood to adulthood," Elros observed as she circled the room.

Albus Medici grinned and remarked, "I wonder where the owner of this room is now. Hopefully not mad enough to scratch the walls or self-destruct from the inside out."

As they conversed, Lumian extended his right palm, attempting to open the wooden desk drawer to see what it held.

Suddenly, an ethereal voice echoed around them.

"My grandfather went mad and ventured into the depths of the underground palace, never to return…"

Lumian tensed, his body swiveling as he scanned the surroundings for the source of the voice.

Albus, Elros, and the others followed suit, clearly hearing the unsettling voice.

"My father went mad and ventured into the depths of the underground palace, never to return…

"My brother went mad and ventured into the depths of the underground palace, never to return…

"I… hear the summonings from the depths of the underground palace…"

Lumian, Albus, Elros, and Iraeta simultaneously directed their gazes at the wooden door across the corridor.

The spectral voice emanated from there.

With a snap, Iraeta, positioned in the corridor, pushed open the wooden door behind him. Ignorance often knew no fear.

The yellowish light immediately illuminated two figures and a pile of materials.

One of them was a flesh-toned puppet mounted on a metal frame, hairless with rudimentary facial features.

Surrounding it were molds, hair, clay, and pigments stored in containers.

A man clad in a grayish-black robe, his natural red hair flowing, was diligently painting the puppet with a fine brush.

Sensing the intrusion of light, the man slowly raised his head, revealing a weathered face adorned with thick hair and dark, iron-like eyes.

Upon spotting Lumian, Iraeta, and the rest, he spoke slowly, his voice ethereal as he inquired, “Are you here to make wax statues?”

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Chapter 426 - 426 “Curse”

426 “Curse”

Iraeta unconsciously took a step back.

“No, there’s no need.”

He snapped out of his daze and focused on the man in the gray robe who was diligently painting the puppet in the dimly lit room. He asked with curiosity, “Are you the artisan of wax statues who serves Count Poufer?”

This Count had a peculiar hobby of crafting wax figures for his friends.

The man with the fiery red beard avoided direct eye contact and continued coloring the half-finished puppet in front of him.

Lumian, who had already returned to the corridor, turned his head and glanced at Albus Medici. Instead of speaking, he directed his question at the enigmatic man in the cluttered room, “What should we call you?”

Lumian was certain that something was amiss with the wax statue artisan before him, but he couldn’t determine the extent of the problem. They had just noticed that no light escaped from this room, indicating that the man had been working on the puppet in complete darkness!

The man with deep, iron-black eyes and a fiery red beard looked up once more and spoke in a spectral tone, “My grandfather went mad and ventured into the depths of the underground palace, never to return…

“My father went mad and ventured into the depths of the underground palace, never to return…”

“So, are you mad as well?” Albus Medici interrupted the man’s ramblings.

The man hesitated for a moment before answering, “I… hear the summonings from the depths of the underground palace…”

At this point, his gaze swept across the faces of Lumian, Albus, and Elros. The corners of his mouth, obscured by his beard, curled up slightly, hinting at an elusive smile.

His vacant iron-black eyes grew more intense, and his voice carried a sense of urgency.

“The three of you, hurry to the depths of the underground palace…”

Iraeta muttered under his breath, “Why not me?”

Lumian’s mind raced as he sought common ground with Albus and Elros.

As Poet Iraeta had pointed out, the “three of you” in the strange man’s statement didn’t include him. Given the peculiar atmosphere and circumstances, something was definitely awry.

I’m a Hunter, and Albus is a Hunter. Could Elros also be a Hunter? While Lumian contemplated this, Albus Medici seemed unfazed by the eerie words of the wax statue artisan. He flashed a cheeky smile and asked, “Do you want us to venture deep into the underground palace to rescue your grandfather, father, and brother, or would you prefer to send your regards?”

Quite aggressive… Logically speaking, he’s at least a Pyromaniac, the kind whose potion has mostly been digested. There’s no need to provoke everyone with every word… Could it be that he’s intentionally misleading others to believe that he’s only a Provoker? Lumian looked at Albus’s well-defined side profile and muttered inwardly.

The man painting the puppet paid Albus no attention and continued his work.

“Sorry to bother you,” Lumian said, not giving Albus a chance to escalate the situation. He reached for the vermilion wooden door’s handle, gently closed it, and left the room behind.

Lumian decided not to explore the room with the iron-clad soldier, fearing it might trigger unwanted events.

In the darkness, Lumian descended the worn stone steps, carbide lamp in hand.

Amid the echoing footsteps, Elros Einhorn suddenly commented, “That man looked like a lion…”

Lumian recalled the wax statue artisan’s appearance. Indeed, with his long, dense red hair and beard, he did resemble a humanized lion.

Albus Medici gently swayed the carbide lamp in his hand and glanced at Elros.

“This is your maternal grandfather’s castle. You’ve lived here for nearly six years. Don’t act like a visitor like us who doesn’t know anything.”

“I genuinely don’t know who that person was,” Elros replied, shaking her head. “I rarely enter the underground palace. The farthest I’ve gone is the room filled with wax statues.”

In other words, during your limited explorations, you had chosen the same path as me. You had selected the Door of Madness among the three doors of Hope,

Madness, and Death… Why didn't you continue deeper? What were you worried about? Lumian deduced some information from Elros Einhorn's succinct answer.

Albus scoffed.

"Have you heard of the legend of Sauron family members going mad and venturing into the depths of the underground palace, never to return?

"For example, my grandfather went mad and ventured into the depths of the underground palace…"

The member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order mimicked the man's speech with an uncanny accuracy.

Excellent, you've asked the question I wanted to ask… Despite Albus Medici's grating manner, he did serve a purpose.

He had no reservations and, with great acumen, asked questions that he couldn't.

With such a teammate around, Lumian could maintain a semblance of distance and conceal his true thoughts and attitude.

The worn stone steps seemed never-ending. As Elros descended carefully, she sighed and explained,

"I've always known about such legends.

"The master of Red Swan Castle and the Sauron family members who reside here, both men and women, gradually become violent and irritable, eventually going mad. It's possible for them to enter the depths of the underground palace after mutilating themselves and never return. These incidents occur sporadically, sometimes once every few years, or two or three times a year.

"Apart from the family members who yearn to restore their forebears' glory, Sauron has distanced himself from this ancient castle. He doesn't want to go mad.

"This has a certain effect, ensuring the Sauron family's continuation and heritage. However, that madness seems to be a curse, a curse rooted in the bloodline. Sauron, who resides elsewhere, will occasionally have people suddenly return and repeat the experiences of their forebears here."

Is this the surface explanation behind the Sauron family's decline? If the core members of the family go mad one by one and enter the depths of the underground palace without returning, the family will indeed decline bit by bit… Why did Elros tell us in detail about the matters that's privy to the Sauron family… She believes that we won't leave alive, so she's satisfying her desire to share? Lumian couldn't help but recall the nightmares he had experienced due to the King's Pie game.

In the nightmares, Red Swan Castle was overrun by lunatics who mutilated themselves in gruesome ways, gouging out their own eyeballs and more.

It seemed that these lunatics might have included various individuals from the Sauron family who had gone mad over the course of more than two centuries.

But not all of them shared the Sauron bloodline. Lumian remembered how Novelist Anori and other participants in the King's Pie game had also gone insane and committed grotesque acts to themselves and others, despite lacking the Sauron family's lineage.

Albus Medici, in his irritating manner, wore a smirk as he asked Elros, "Did your maternal grandfather also go crazy and venture into the depths of the underground palace?"

Elros remained calm and replied, "No, he passed away due to chronic headaches. Not every owner of Red Swan Castle eventually goes mad."

Albus, undeterred, continued to press, "What are the common factors among those who don't go mad?"

Elros's face was illuminated by the carbide lamp's glow as she responded in her usual tone, "It's a family secret."

In essence, she was saying: "I'm not going to tell you."

This response left Lumian, who was leading the way, feeling a growing sense of frustration.

If Elros had simply cautioned them against prying into the Sauron family's affairs from the start, he wouldn't have reacted emotionally. But her willingness to share intriguing information, only to withhold the crucial details, felt like a deliberate provocation.

After a moment of silence, Albus Medici's smile returned, and he probed further, "What about your mother?"

Elros replied, "She passed away normally due to an illness."

Albus chuckled and continued, "What about you? You also have the Sauron family's bloodline. Will you suddenly go crazy?"

Elros turned her head and glanced at the impolite fellow, revealing an indescribable smile.

"In the long run, we'll all go mad."

Who do you mean by "we"? Lumian's forehead twitched, sensing that Elros wasn't just referring to the Sauron family.

A moment of silence followed, broken by Poet Iraeta's heartfelt sigh.

“The fear of a family, the curse that has lasted for generations, and the forebears who have ventured into the dark underground. What an excellent theme for an essay. It’s very inspiring. If Anori were to find out, he would definitely produce a classic novel. Even I would have the urge to write a long poem.”

As they conversed, the four of them finally reached the end of the lengthy stone steps.

Before them stretched a vast hall with grayish-white stone pillars supporting the dark ceiling above.

The four carbide lamps illuminated the space, revealing several piles of bones partially exposed behind certain stone pillars.

“Plenty of the dead.” Albus Medici, undaunted, sighed with a smile and strolled toward one of the bone piles.

At that moment, Lumian picked up a rustling sound.

He swiftly raised his head and raised the carbide lamp.

In the dim yellow lighting, mottled ceiling, a colossal shadow moved with surprising speed, crawling across the uneven surface before vanishing into the shadows on the other side.

The shadow was a spider-like creature.

In comparison to its kind, it had only one pair of eyes, but each eye contained numerous tiny single eyes moving independently, radiating a cold and eerie light.

Countless long, thick bristles encircled a withered, blackened, fist-sized heart on its back.

Lumian’s blood ran cold as a term leaped to the forefront of his mind: Black Hunting Spider!

This was one of the main ingredients of the Conspirer potion.

Over the past month, although Lumian hadn’t yet acquired any ingredients related to Black Hunting Spiders and Sphinxes, he had amassed a general understanding of these two Beyonder creatures, including their appearance and abilities. Recently, he had contemplated “teleporting” to another location in his quest to locate these creatures.

However, the Black Hunting Spider he had just witnessed was even more unusual than the information he had gathered. It deviated significantly in several details, particularly the presence of a withered heart that eerily resembled that of a human.

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Chapter 427 - 427 Hunters' Cooperation

427 Hunters' Cooperation

The suspected Black Hunting Spider flashed and disappeared into the shadows on the other side of the hall.

By the time Iraeta sensed the abnormality and looked up at the ceiling, the colossal black spider had vanished.

"What are you looking at?" the poet asked curiously, casually commenting, "There's no mural on the walls of the underground maze. This doesn't match the Sauron family's former glory."

In the Northern Continent, murals were essential when constructing grand buildings. All painters took pride in being invited to create these magnificent works of art, especially when it came to epic paintings on cathedral domes and walls. These paintings were not just a status symbol but also required months or even years to complete.

Lumian withdrew his gaze and smiled.

"I saw a venomous spider. No one has been here for a long time. It seems to have become a haven for dangerous creatures."

Without waiting for Iraeta's response, he suggested, "Albus, Elros, and I have impressive skills and extensive hunting experience. It's clear you lack sufficient training. Why don't you return to the surface ahead of time? Continuing forward could be perilous for you. You don't truly believe you can find the crown and become king, do you?"

Iraeta muttered, "No problem. You're my sponsor, after all.

"If it weren't to accompany you guys and have some fun, I wouldn't venture into this pitch-black underground. I'm past the age of adventuring and performing arts. Alright, I'll head back to the surface now and wait for you in the living room. There's La Fée Verte, black tea, refreshments, and tobacco. It's much more comfortable than here."

As the poet spoke, he turned and walked toward the stone steps at the hall's exit.

Just as he took several steps, a blaze erupted from the shadow on his right, hurtling towards Iraeta like a crimson spear.

Behind Lumian, flames surged around Albus Medici, transforming him into a crimson spear that collided with the flaming spear attacking the poet.

The member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order transformed into a crimson spear and flew out with a whoosh, colliding with the flaming spear that had attacked the poet.

With a resounding crash, the two flaming spears disintegrated, revealing Albus Medici and the colossal black spider with a withered heart.

The spider emitted a high-frequency squeak, raising its body and swinging its four thick-furred limbs, resembling scythes that flickered with a cold light, at Albus Medici.

At the same time, a nearly white-hot spear flew and struck the side of the black spider, incinerating its hard shell and piercing through it.

It was Elros Einhorn. She seemed prepared and quietly shifted her position, waiting for the colossal black spider to appear.

In the next moment, agile crimson Fire Ravens followed different trajectories, rushing into the wound created by the burning-white spear.

Rumble!

The fiery explosion within the colossal black spider's body created a chaotic storm of flames, tearing at its outer carapace and flesh.

He had started condensing the Fire Raven the moment Albus Medici confronted the assailant.

Under the relentless assault, the spider emitted a piercing screech that reverberated within its chitinous shell.

The shriveled, blackened heart behind it suddenly glowed dark red, creating blazing fireballs.

These fireballs formed a net, enveloping the colossal black spider, and shot toward Lumian, Albus, and Elros, leaving crimson trails in their wake.

In contrast, Iraeta, who had been stunned by the superhuman battle, was ignored and unharmed.

Rumble! Rumble! Rumble!

As Lumian and the others dodged the incoming fireballs, one of them shot deep into the hall, dissipating quickly.

Hidden within the fireball, the colossal black spider seized the opportunity to break through Lumian and the others' encirclement and disappear once more.

The crimson flames around them continued to burn. Albus Medici glanced at the dark-red liquid dripping from the heavily injured black spider but didn't immediately pursue it. Instead, he smiled at Lumian and said,

"Nice baiting."

Lumian didn't deny it.

He had asked Poet Iraeta to return to the surface alone to lure out the colossal black spider as bait.

If the spider didn't take the bait, Iraeta would have left the underground palace without any danger. But if the spider planned to hunt an ordinary person alone, Lumian was ready to use Spirit World Traversal and the Spell of Harrumph to protect the target. He aimed to eliminate the creature, suspected to be a potion ingredient, as quickly as possible.

With such an opportunity, he wasn't willing to hold back and hide his trump cards. He wanted to end the battle swiftly to prevent any mishaps.

Unexpectedly, Albus Medici's reaction was quicker than his. Therefore, Lumian stopped in time and switched to Fire Ravens. He intended to observe the black spider's combat style and uncover any secrets it might hold.

Now, Lumian was certain that the colossal black spider was more formidable than a Black Hunting Spider. If it were the latter, it would never have escaped the encirclement of three Hunters; it would have perished from the repeated explosions.

Although it was confirmed that the black spider wasn't equivalent to a Black Hunting Spider, it was undoubtedly from the Hunter pathway. With the corresponding Beyonder powers, the special parts on its body could certainly be used to brew potions.

Lumian turned to Elros and said straightforwardly, "That monster is different from a Black Hunting Spider. There's a human-like heart on its back. What's going on?"

Elros gazed at the dark-red blood dripping into the hall's shadows, pondering for a moment.

"I've never seen such a Beyonder creature before."

She paused for a moment before continuing, "All I know is that if the owner of Red Swan Castle and many core members of the Sauron family don't go mad and venture into the depths of the underground palace without returning, someone will extract their heart and send it somewhere in the underground palace."

Upon hearing this, Lumian suddenly recalled a scene he had dreamt of due to the lingering effects of the King's Pie game.

In a bronze coffin surrounded by countless white candles, a hand with dark-red, almost black blood vessels extended, holding a shriveled, withered, black heart with some blood seeping out.

What the f*ck is the Sauron family up to? Lumian couldn't help but curse inwardly.

At that moment, Poet Iraeta finally snapped out of his daze. He looked at Lumian and the others in shock, fear, and excitement.

"Are all of you Beyonders capable of using Beyonder powers?"

"You know about Beyonders too?" Albus Medici wore an expression that suggested he wasn't worthy of knowing.

As Iraeta approached Lumian, he quickly explained, "Seven or eight years ago, I went to a battlefield to gather material and saw something. I knew that there were many people in our army who could use superpowers. They were called Beyonders."

"We do have superpowers, and they look quite similar," Lumian said with a smile, glancing around. "Do you want to follow us deeper or return to the surface yourself?"

Iraeta didn't hide his fear and muttered, "Of course, I'll follow you. Although it's very likely that I'll encounter the large spider again, it's better than walking alone in the darkness with unknown monsters lurking around.

"I don't want the last poem of my life to be 'Oh, foolish Iraeta.'"

Lumian pondered for a few seconds and calmly said, "If you wish to return to the surface, I can escort you to the entrance of the underground palace."

"Then I'll definitely choose to return!" Iraeta changed his mind without hesitation.

Lumian then turned to Albus and Elros and asked, "Do you want to join me, wait here, or venture deeper by yourselves?"

Albus Medici gave Lumian a deep look and sneered.

"I didn't expect you to be such a moral person. You can escort this poet with a dubious reputation yourself."

His implication was clear: "You must have ulterior motives for escorting someone out, considering your lack of morals."

He didn't specify if he intended to stay or venture in alone.

"I'm with Albus," Elros, who stood by Albus, replied with a smile, holding the carbide lamp.

Lumian observed the dark-red blood droplets left by the black spider and proceeded to ascend the stone steps with Iraeta, using the carbide lamp for illumination.

In the pitch-black and silent underground, they returned to the corridor where the wax statue artisan and the iron soldiers were.

Poet Iraeta glanced back at the deep darkness below and said to his sponsor, “Those two shouldn’t be simple.”

“I know,” Lumian replied nonchalantly.

Holding the carbide lamp that emitted a yellowish glow, he advanced at a moderate pace.

Iraeta walked closely beside him and continued in his usual tone, “The war between the Loen Kingdom and the Feysac Empire ended over seven years ago. But Miss Elros mentioned that her father died in the war six years ago. If I recall correctly, it was likely due to dissatisfaction with the Feysac Empire’s losing treaty, leading to a rebellion. This was a civil war in the Feysac Empire. Why did Miss Elros mention the Loen Kingdom?

“Is her father a representative of the extreme faction or a member of the royal family who perished in the rebellion?”

A member of the royal family who rebelled? Is that why they fled to Trier? Lumian considered the information provided by the political enthusiast, Iraeta.

Iraeta glanced at his sponsor and continued, “Actually, before today, I saw Albus Medici elsewhere.”

Lumian’s curiosity was piqued as he asked, “Where?”

Iraeta glanced around and lowered his voice.

“Sacred Heart Cloister.”

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Chapter 428 - 428 Incineration

428 Incineration

Sacred Heart Cloister? The largest cloister in Trier's Eternal Blazing Sun Church? Why did Albus Medici go there? Could he be an undercover agent sent by the Purifier into the Iron and Blood Cross Order? Or did Gardner Martin instruct him to keep an eye on the Sacred Heart Cloister? Lumian's mind raced with questions and guesses.

As he advanced, clutching a carbide lamp, Iraeta hastily interjected with more information.

"I have a friend at the Sacred Heart Cloister. I often go there to drink with him."

Lumian, momentarily diverting his focus from Albus Medici, jested, "Can the cloister monks drink?"

The two moved through the shadowy passageway, guided solely by the yellowish glow of the carbide lamp.

Iraeta rambled, "Of course they can, but they can't partake in liquor or get inebriated. The wine brewed by the Sacred Heart Cloister is the finest I've ever tasted."

"Is your friend a monk?" Lumian walked at a moderate pace, his footsteps echoing through the seemingly endless passageway.

Iraeta appeared content conversing with Ciel and didn't hide anything.

"Yes, he's a member of the Brotherhood Minor and served as my nephew's baptism priest. Later, he could no longer tolerate the cathedral's clergy indulging in pleasures and chose to become a monk. He joined the Sacred Heart Cloister and is currently overseeing the brewery."

A member of the Brotherhood Minor, champions of temperance and asceticism… Lumian deduced this and redirected their conversation.

"How often have you and your friend seen Albus Medici? What was the reason for his visit to the Sacred Heart Cloister?"

"Just once," Iraeta muttered. "I don't concern myself with such matters. There are no nuns there. When I saw him, he was walking through the corridor with a monk and entered the rear of the cloister."

It appears that Albus Medici had not entered covertly or with fear of discovery… Lumian deduced this from Iraeta's account.

Amidst Poet Iraeta's relentless search for topics, the two of them finally passed through the eerie wax statue room, leaving behind the hall with the enigmatic doors of Hope, Madness, and Death. They retraced their steps to the underground palace.

Iraeta let out a long sigh of relief and relaxed. He grumbled, "The underground palace is so dangerous, and there are creatures with supernatural abilities. Poufer truly led us into an adventure down here!

"Is he attempting to get us killed?"

You've all been corrupted by the King's Pie game many times. I wonder if you're truly alive… Lumian refrained from a direct response to Iraeta's grievances, opting for a playful smile as he remarked,

"It seems that the more frightened and tense you are, the more you like to talk."

"That's what makes me feel alive," Iraeta confessed. He extinguished the carbide lamp as they exited the underground palace via the spiral staircase.

Lumian turned back, retracing his steps to the Door of Madness.

He hadn't closed the door when he left. Even though he hadn't approached yet, the yellowish light from the carbide lamp made the wax statues appear faintly, as if they were waiting in the darkness.

Lumian stopped at the door, slowly bent down, and placed the carbide lamp on the ground in front of him.

Then, he straightened up and swept his gaze across the wax statues' faces, their expressions frozen in agony and shrouded in shadows.

Crimson Fire Ravens began to materialize around him, one after another.

Since Count Poufer had shown ill intent by leading them into the perilous depths of the underground palace—any ordinary person would already have died—there was no reason to show any courtesy to a member of the Sauron family, the owner of Red Swan Castle!

Lumian's plan was straightforward: to set the wax statues ablaze. This had several purposes. First, it might assist in digesting his potion. Second, it could preemptively eliminate potential threats, preventing the wax statues from coming to life and attacking at a critical moment. Lastly, it could create a chaotic situation that would disrupt Count Poufer's secret plan, sowing doubt and confusion for their further exploration.

Chaos often created opportunities.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! With a swift motion, he released a flurry of Crimson Fire Ravens that darted towards the wax statues.

After dispatching two batches of Fire Ravens, Lumian dropped to one knee, pressing his hands to the ground.

From his palms, fiery serpents slithered out, winding their way through the pile of wax statues and swiftly igniting them.

A cacophony of explosions followed as the wax statues' heads burst, and their lower extremities were engulfed in flames, creating a cage of crimson fire.

The flesh-white wax that composed their bodies melted rapidly, turning into liquid droplets or softening and crumbling away, rendering them fragile under the dual onslaught of explosion and combustion.

Smack!

The "muscles" on one of the wax statues completely disintegrated, revealing a new face.

It was a human face!

It was a male human who had lost his eyes and died long ago, his face filled with pain!

Silently, more wax statues softened and crumbled.

Without exception, there was a human corpse inside every one of them.

Among the corpses encased in the wax statues were men and women, some with exposed flesh and skin, others with heads and bodies that appeared to have been crudely stitched together after death. Some had open stomachs, their intestines tangled and filled with white wax, creating a grotesque sight…

What all of them had in common was the haunting expression of pain etched across their faces, as if they had lived through unspeakable horrors or had been trapped in the darkest of nightmares.

As Lumian observed, the melted wax transformed into a viscous liquid that oozed from the faces of the deceased humans. It was as if these tortured souls were weeping tears of relief as they faced the purifying embrace of the flames.

Inside the statues are actually real people… Lumian, who had his fair share of horrifying scenes, couldn't help but tense up, instinctively feeling repulsed and afraid.

He finally knew where the ordinary people from Red Swan Castle who had gone mad and mutilated themselves in his nightmares had gone.

Lumian rose to his feet, clutching the carbide lamp. Crimson flames erupted from his body, transforming into blazing meteors that streaked to every corner of the wax statue-filled chamber, turning it into an inferno.

The flesh-white wax began to burn fervently, feeding upon itself until there was no space left for the fire to consume.

Lumian's eyes reflected the crimson conflagration and the viscous wax tears on his pale face.

He didn't avert his gaze but watched intently.

At that moment, he gained a newfound understanding of his pyromaniac abilities. The once-vague third acting principle became clear.

The Pyromaniac wreaked havoc and caused utter catastrophe!

As for Pyromaniacs, they could willingly unleash disaster and destruction upon anyone.

Lumian fervently wished that the heretics and those who had gone "mad" and could only harm others would be engulfed by the flames!

Having amalgamated his various acts into this principle, Lumian had an uncommonly clear sense that his Pyromaniac potion had been entirely digested. He could even hear an imaginary shattering sound.

With a series of thuds, the lifeless bodies, stripped of their wax support, fell one by one to the ground. They piled up and burned even more fiercely.

All of a sudden, the wooden door creaked open from the exit opposite the wax statue's chamber.

The wax statue artisan, his thick beard and hair resembling a humanoid lion, stood before Lumian.

His iron-black eyes were tinged crimson by the flames that surged toward the ceiling. His voice sounded ethereal as he inquired, "Why… did you… set my wax statues ablaze?"

Lumian didn't answer; instead, he activated the black mark on his right shoulder.

Spirit World Traversal!

A spectral light flickered within his clothing, and his form swiftly materialized next to the wax statue artisan.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian parted his lips.

"Ha!"

A pale-yellow, gaseous light shot out of his mouth and struck the wax statue artisan's head.

The wax statue artisan, clad in a grayish-black robe, swayed visibly, as if momentarily losing his balance. He didn't lose consciousness completely; it was more like he had undergone a Psychic Piercing and was in a state of shock induced by the pain.

Lumian didn't rely solely on the Spell of Harrumph. He raised his prepared left palm and hurled a crimson fireball, tightly compressed in layers, into the wax statue artisan's mouth and nose with Fire Infusion.

The fireball, gradually turning white in color, whooshed into the target's mouth and nostrils, invading his brain.

Boom!

The blazing white fireball exploded from the inside out while Lumian watched as the wax statue artisan's head expanded rapidly before exploding.

Flaming flesh and blood spurted out. Lumian, already prepared, shielded his face with the carbide lamp in his right hand, leaving the back of his hand stained with blood.

With a thud, the wax statue artisan, with only a small half of his head remaining, swayed and collapsed to the ground.

Lumian, who had meticulously prepared a sequence of attacks, found himself momentarily taken aback. He hadn't expected the situation to resolve so effortlessly.

He had foreseen that the enigmatic wax statue artisan might pose a formidable challenge, and he had readied himself to "teleport" instantly if things took a turn for the worse.

It was worth noting that the wax statue that had reanimated previously had been more formidable than the wax statue artisan himself. Merely being in its presence had weighed heavily on Lumian's body and mind, almost rendering him incapable of resistance.

Did he possess the unique ability to create these wax statues, but lacked inherent power? Or did he need to draw strength from the Sauron family's underground palace to bring these menacing wax figures to life? Perhaps my attack was too swift, leaving him no time to react. He perished on the spot before he could tap into any external strength? Lumian gazed down at the wax statue artisan and assessed the situation.

…

In the depths of the underground palace, within a hall adorned with white candles,

Poufer Sauron, seated in a corner, abruptly opened his eyes and fixed his gaze upon the bronze coffin situated in the center of the chamber.

Around the coffin, numerous candles strangely extinguished without warning.

Wh— Poufer rose to his feet, his expression slightly twisted in consternation.

…

At the exit of the wax statue chamber, Lumian witnessed a crimson radiance emanating from the wax statue artisan's body.

Initially, the luminescence surged towards the head, but only a small fragment of the wax statue artisan's head remained. Consequently, it shifted to his chest, yet it couldn't dissipate.

Lumian felt a tinge of surprise. He tore open the grayish-black robe of the wax statue master, unveiling his chest.

There lay a sinister, pitch-black wound, and the space where his heart should have resided was hollow!

The heart is missing… Elros had mentioned that the Sauron family members' hearts had to be sent deep into the underground palace… Lumian vaguely grasped the reason behind the wax statue artisan's formidable yet fragile nature.

Ultimately, the crimson light coalesced into an ethereal entity with myriad gullies, resembling a shrunken blood-colored brain.

Unsure of its significance, Lumian stashed it away and made his exit.

The flames in the room continued to burn, but for some unknown reason, they failed to spread.

…

In the stone pillar hall where the confrontation with the black spider had transpired.

Albus and Elros observed as Lumian returned, carrying a carbide lamp that emitted a faint yellowish glow.

Almost simultaneously, they noticed the specks of blood on Lumian's body.

"Did you kill the poet?" Albus asked, amused.

Lumian shook his head and replied calmly, "I killed the one making the wax statues."

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Chapter 429 - 429 Orders

429 Orders

Upon hearing Lumian's response, Albus's eyes widened slightly, and his eyebrows twitched.

She quickly smiled and scrutinized Lumian's face with a meaningful gaze.

At that moment, Albus returned to normal and gazed at Lumian. He clicked his tongue and said, "You're really ruthless. You even went back and killed the wax statue guy."

"I had no choice. He stopped me from burning the wax statues," Lumian said with a gentle smile.

Albus's eyebrows twitched again.

"Did you really burn them?"

"Of course," Lumian shared his findings sincerely. "The wax statues' surfaces melted and peeled away to reveal human corpses."

Albus wasn't surprised at all. He applauded and smiled mockingly.

"Well done! I must praise your courage."

It's as if he's saying that I'm ignorant and fearless… Lumian didn't believe that Albus was really praising him.

Elros maintained her smile and spoke as though a bystander, "The Sauron family isn't the only one in Red Swan Castle who's gone mad. The butler, guards, valets, and maids have also gone mad. Their deaths after mutilation are terrifying. It's not suitable for their families and the public to know. They can only report their disappearance and compensate them a large sum of money."

Even so, they can still recruit new servants… Is it because the salary is high, or is the matter kept under wraps? Will they only choose foreigners who have just arrived in Trier and don't know anything? Lumian knew that ancient families like Sauron had servants who served them for generations, but their numbers were already limited.

"Shall we continue forward?" Elros inquired.

“Of course.” Lumian still wanted to track down the severely injured black spider and extract the Beyonder characteristic it would produce to study the withered, black heart.

Albus Medici answered with his actions and walked deeper into the hall.

Under the yellowish glow of the carbide lamp, the darkness gradually receded, revealing the drops of dark-red blood flowing from the mutated giant spider.

As he advanced, he casually asked Elros, “Who’s responsible for sending the extracted hearts into the depths of the underground palace?”

“Just because members of the Sauron family go mad and disappear into the depths of the underground palace doesn’t mean that ordinary members of the Sauron family can’t enter. In particular, the successor of Red Swan Castle often goes to certain rooms and halls in the underground maze. It begins the first time Poufer becomes king while playing King’s Pie.”

Influenced by the frenzied and violent spirit? Lumian recalled the invisible entity that had circled above his head after winning the King’s Pie game while not daring to descend due to the Blood Emperor’s aura.

Soon, the trio reached the end of the hall. Through an open wooden door, they followed a corridor with numerous reliefs of soldiers engraved on both sides and a few storage rooms.

The figure wore a light-colored formal suit and had curly black hair. He had a slightly mean appearance and was clearly a participant in this gathering. He was Ernst Young, the critic assigned to Count Poufer’s team.

Ernst Young held a carbide lamp that no longer emitted any light and smiled bitterly.

“We had already split up, and each believed we could find the Count’s crown. But before I could search carefully, the carbide lamp suddenly went off. I had no choice but to return in the dark and search for a room with a bell rope.”

“How unlucky.” Albus sighed exaggeratedly for Ernst Young.

He had already reached the open door and stood beside Ernst Young.

Suddenly, crimson fireballs shot out from his free left hand, landing beside the critic and creating a blazing circle of flames.

“W-what are you doing?” Ernst Young asked in surprise.

Albus replied with a smile, “I’m here to help you illuminate the area. Isn’t it very bright now?”

Ernst Young fell silent, crimson flames dancing on his face.

He’s not surprised that Albus can create flames and possesses superpowers… Lumian had sensed that there was something amiss with Ernst Young when he saw him, like a troublemaker sent by Poufer Sauron. However, saying that something was amiss was an understatement; he was entirely abnormal.

Flames raged, and the temperature around Ernst Young soared.

Lumian glanced over and noticed a strange softening on the critic’s face.

A viscous, wax-like liquid seeped out of Ernst Young’s skin.

As Lumian’s forehead throbbed, Albus extended his hands, leaned forward, and pushed open the wooden door.

Amidst the creaking sounds, the scene behind the door was tainted with a yellowish glow.

Coffins of varying sizes had been chiseled into the walls. Chains hung from the ceiling, and coffins of various colors dangled from them. The ground was filled with countless coffins, with only narrow gaps for people to pass through.

At that moment, Ernst Young raised his hands, his eyes empty, and tore at his face.

The half-waxed, half-real skin was torn off, revealing bloody flesh and dark-blue —nearly black—blood vessels.

A potent scent of blood and burning wax permeated the air, causing all the coffins in the hall to tremble simultaneously.

Bang! Bang! Bang! The coffin lids of various colors opened one after another, and black giant spiders with compound eyes, lush bristles, and withered hearts inlaid crawled out.

Rustling sounds filled the air as the giant black spiders covered almost every corner of the hall.

Aiming at Lumian and the others, they extended their mouths and quickly condensed a crimson fireball that was nearly white.

Numerous fireballs flew out, as if a volley had been fired from an artillery battery.

Whether it was Lumian, Albus, or Elros, they all lunged to the side of the corridor, avoiding the location facing the hall.

The entire corridor was engulfed in flames, ravaged by the shockwaves. The walls on both sides showed signs of collapse.

Lumian’s target was an empty storage room to the side, successfully evading the violent bombardment.

Elros was the same. Only Albus used Ernst Young as a cover.

Amidst the incessant explosions, the critic, who had lost most of his face, shattered into pieces. Flesh and blood splattered, and some parts of his body melted like candles.

The rustling sound resounded once more, and the innumerable black spiders seemed to surge out of the hall.

Lumian's scalp tingled as he listened. His first instinct was to quickly "teleport" away.

In the face of such mutated black spiders, he had no problem dealing with one or two. Two was a bit of a stretch, but three meant he had to consider retreating. And now, there were dozens of them!

Son of a sow! There are so many of you. What do you usually eat to survive? Just air? Lumian cursed inwardly as he activated the black mark on his right shoulder to use Spirit World Traversal.

Suddenly, he heard a nearly ethereal female voice.

The voice quickly became clearer. It belonged to Elros Einhorn.

Then, the girl's voice in Hermes reverberated.

"I command you, in the name of the Sauron family bloodline.

"Leave this area!"

The rustling stopped abruptly, and the entire area fell into an indescribable silence.

After a few seconds, the rapid crawling sounds of arthropods echoed again, but they spread in all directions.

Lumian ceased his attempts to use Spirit World Traversal and cast his gaze towards the corridor beyond.

The flames gradually extinguished, and no black spiders appeared.

Lumian left the side storage room in thought and saw that all the coffins in the hall ahead were open, but there was no sign of the giant black spiders.

Elros, dressed in a light-colored dress, stood in the corridor, her right hand clenched tightly, her left palm hanging low. Her aura seemed slightly different from before, as if the commander-in-chief of an army had arrived before her loyal soldiers, naturally displaying an alluring charm that made people submit to her.

Clap! Clap! Clap! Albus Medici stood up from behind the crumbled Ernst Young, clutching a lamp.

He smiled mockingly and said, “Aren’t you an Einhorn? Why are you using the Sauron family’s name?”

Elros cast a cold glance at the Iron and Blood Cross Order member, causing him to subconsciously shut his mouth.

“I have half of the Sauron bloodline.” Elros turned to Lumian and smiled again. “Do you want to continue?”

“Of course!” Albus Medici was the first to respond.

Lumian cracked his neck and smiled. “The game isn’t over yet.”

Although he had the urge to escape the underground maze, the more he wanted to succumb to his urges, the more he couldn’t show it.

His experience and Aurore’s teachings had taught him not to let others guess his true thoughts under such circumstances.

The aura around Elros that made people involuntary submissive gradually dissipated, and she returned to her obedient state.

Lumian and Albus entered the hall ahead side by side and saw that the wooden coffins of various colors were empty. The corpses that should have existed looked like they had been eaten by the giant black spiders.

Just as he was about to pass through the mass tomb, Lumian spotted a massive black spider sprawled in a corner. Its side was hideously torn, and dark-red blood continued to flow.

This was the Beyonder creature that had previously fought the three Hunters. Due to its severe injuries, it couldn’t leave the tomb according to Elros’s “orders.” It could only stay where it was and “lick” its wounds.

Upon seeing Lumian and the others, the giant black spider half-raised its body and let out a threatening squeak.

Glancing at the shriveled heart on the black spider’s back, Lumian casually smiled and said, “It’s mine, and the rest of the spoils of war are yours. How does that sound?”

Albus Medici chuckled. “Is that all you eye? Only you care about such things.”

Elros’s lips curled into a faint smile. “I have no problem with that, but since it’s your spoils of war, you can retrieve it yourself. I won’t provide any assistance.”

“I like that. You can occasionally say something nice,” Albus praised Elros before casting his gaze at Lumian.

The two Hunters, a man and a woman, appeared to be waiting to “appreciate” Lumian’s performance.

The colossal black spider had suffered severe injuries but had clearly not lost its ability to fight!

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Chapter 430 - 430 “Reckless”

430 “Reckless”

Sensing Albus and Elros’s gazes, Lumian cautiously approached the injured black spider with the carbide lamp in hand.

As a Hunter, he had a clear grasp of his two teammates’ current mindsets.

It was akin to navigating a dark forest. Everyone assumed the role of the hunter, but the moment one revealed their vulnerability, they became the hunted, vulnerable to collective assault.

Albus and Elros desired insights into Lumian’s condition and capabilities.

They harbored doubts that Lumian could easily dispatch the wax statue artisan, believing he must have paid a significant price. Moreover, they aimed to decipher the precise Sequence of the previous winner of the King’s Pie game and the mystical items he carried.

Lumian had no qualms about eliminating the severely injured black spider, but he was reluctant to unveil his trump cards—Spirit World Traversal and the Spell of Harrumph—to Albus and Elros.

As he closed in on the black spider, his thoughts raced, pondering the most efficient strategy that would incur minimal cost and time, making the task as straightforward as possible.

Lumian’s gaze swept from the torn-open side of the black spider, which remained trapped in the hall like its kin, dark-red blood oozing out. With his left hand, he casually retrieved a silver earring from his pocket and fastened it to his left earlobe.

Lie!

Having fully digested the Pyromaniac potion, Lumian’s emotions steadied. He could now covertly wield the Flog boxing gloves and employ Lie.

Crimson flaming ravens materialized around him.

Almost simultaneously, the colossal black spider reacted. The shriveled heart within it emitted a dark-red glow, conjuring a plethora of menacing fireballs, as if weaving a protective crimson net.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! The Fire Ravens encircling Lumian shot out, each following a distinct trajectory towards their respective targets.

Over a hundred crimson fireballs erupted from the black spider's form, hurtling forward with menacing howls.

Rumble!

In an instant, some Fire Ravens were intercepted by the fireballs, while others detonated them, setting off a series of explosions around the black spider, causing flames to erupt one after another.

At that precise moment, a brilliant fireball streaked towards the hall's exit.

Lumian had been awaiting this opening. He raised his left hand and snapped his fingers.

With a resounding crash, the bright fireball lost its trajectory and plummeted to the ground.

Instead of detonating, flames billowed upward, revealing the black spider's figure.

Lumian charged forward, his left hand ablaze with crimson flames.

They coiled, layer upon layer, compressing until they almost turned white.

Upon reaching the black spider's side, which lay stunned from the impact, Lumian leaned in and swung his left arm, pressing the blazing white fireball against the grotesque laceration, allowing it to penetrate the creature's body.

Amid the frantic thrashing of its limbs, the black spider barely managed to turn around. Lumian had already capitalized on the moment to lean back and roll, increasing the distance between them.

His form materialized beside the crimson sea created by the Fire Ravens and the fireball, distancing himself from the creature's violent aura.

Boom!

The white-hot fireball detonated within the black spider's body. The incineration might not have been visually apparent, but the swift expansion of gas tore through the Beyonder creature entirely, ejecting its chitinous shell along with its flesh.

The colossal black spider emitted a spine-chilling screech as its eight hairy legs frantically recoiled.

Lumian wasted no time, preventing it from regaining its composure. He condensed a crimson spear that gleamed nearly white and hurled it toward the creature.

The flaming spear soared through the air, piercing the gaping wound and pinning the giant black spider to the ground.

The spear disintegrated, setting its insides ablaze. The black spider writhed a few times before falling silent.

Lumian didn't rush to approach his fallen foe. He turned to Albus and Elros. With a smile, he removed Lie and said, "It's settled."

As he spoke, he summoned dozens of crimson Fire Ravens and sent them swooping toward the seemingly lifeless black spider.

Boom!

The black spider leaped once more, self-destructing.

It had been pretending to be dead!

Unfortunately for it, Lumian had maintained his distance and didn't fall into the trap. He only sacrificed a dozen Fire Ravens.

The remaining crimson Fire Ravens swarmed the battered body of the black spider, restoring "peace" to it.

Upon witnessing this, Albus nodded slowly and grudgingly admitted, "Not bad."

Elros observed thoughtfully, offering no immediate response to Lumian's proclamation.

Lumian turned to the motionless black spider, waiting for an iron-black light to emerge from its body before he approached.

After assessing the black spider's condition, he decided to exploit its severely injured state. Potential weaknesses included a probable decrease in Flame Controlling ability and agility. Therefore, he activated Lie and harnessed its Flame Controlling attributes to match his own speed and agility.

The iron-black light didn't converge on the black spider's compound eye as Lumian had anticipated. Instead, it flowed into the shriveled, blackened heart embedded in its back like a stream.

Lumian halted beside his prey, puzzled by the unfolding scene. After the Beyonder characteristic seeped out, he decided to collect it before drawing any conclusions. He carefully removed the shriveled heart, black compound eyes, and poison glands from the mouth, stashing them in separate concealed bags and metal canisters.

"Don't tell me you're merely a Pyromaniac and haven't advanced to become a Conspirer?" Albus taunted.

You know perfectly well that I only recently became a Pyromaniac when I joined the Iron and Blood Cross Order… Lumian grumbled inwardly. He straightened up and offered a smile.

"That's correct. I'm still just a Pyromaniac."

"Pyromaniacs aren't capable of taking down the wax statue artisan…" Elros mumbled softly.

Albus's gaze briefly flickered towards Lumian's pocket where Lie was concealed, but he said nothing more.

See, I'm speaking the truth. If you doubt me and suspect otherwise, there's little I can do… Lumian chuckled, picked up the carbide lamp, and led the way to the exit of the hall.

After traversing another dark corridor, they arrived in a dimly lit room.

Within the yellowish light, iron-clad soldiers donned in blue coats adorned with golden threads came into view.

Unlike children's toys, each one stood nearly two meters tall. The spears they held glinted with a frigid gleam and appeared exceptionally sharp.

"If they were to come to life, it'd be an entire army," Albus remarked with a hint of significance.

Army, soldiers… Lumian suddenly recollected the desire for submission in the King's Pie game. He remembered the wax statue's actions when it attacked him and the evident hierarchy within the Iron and Blood Cross Order—Brigade Commander, Deputy Brigade Commander, Commanding Officer, NCO, and Soldier.

In the midst of his musings, Lumian made an educated guess.

Could the higher ranks of the Hunter pathway involve the military, obedience, and regimentation?

The wax statues resemble soldiers awaiting commands, as do these iron automata. Could a high-Sequence Beyonder of the Hunter pathway possess the ability to create specialized soldiers?

The underground palace of Red Swan Castle is indeed teeming with the essence of the Hunter pathway. It's no wonder I encounter creatures from this pathway so frequently…

This meant that Lumian didn't have to search. He merely needed to engage in combat to secure the corresponding rewards.

What a perilous hunting ground, one that could potentially make me the prey, yet offers substantial gains! He sighed deeply.

Lumian observed as Albus Medici summoned layers of compressed white fireballs and casually sent them gliding across the room.

The fireballs didn't detonate; they hovered silently over the ground, resting on the shoulders and hats of the iron soldiers.

After the trio departed the room, Albus transferred the carbide lamp to his left hand, raised his right palm, and snapped his fingers, emulating Lumian.

Rumble! Rumble! Rumble!

In the room behind them, the white-hot fireballs ignited one after another, setting each other ablaze and causing the ground to quiver slightly.

Delayed Explosion!

One of Pyromaniac's abilities, Delayed Explosion!

Despite the fact that the iron soldiers in the room were constructed of metal, they either lost their limbs or internal components under the formidable shockwave. Some were even buried beneath stone bricks as a result of the collapsed wall.

Noticing Lumian's gaze, Albus wore a satisfied smile.

"To eliminate concealed threats, just like how you handled those wax statues."

"I thought you wouldn't dare," Lumian replied with a grin.

Upon witnessing Albus's actions, Lumian discerned his intentions. He was taken aback that Red Swan Castle's underground palace appeared to possess a form of self-defense mechanism. No matter how potent the explosions or flames, their effects were confined to a single room, preventing spillover.

Indeed, without such protective measures, Red Swan Castle would have likely crumbled long ago, given the rampant monsters dwelling within… Lumian observed another descending corridor ahead.

At the corridor's terminus stood a pair of hefty iron doors, the dark surface marred by large splotches of red, as if someone had splattered blood on them.

Elros took a deep breath and moved ahead of Lumian and Albus.

She reached the door, carefully set down the carbide lamp, extended her hands, leaned forward, and exerted force.

Amidst a grating sound, the iron-black door slowly swung open.

Lumian's eyelids twitched when he beheld a vast expanse of candlelight.

The bronze coffin from his nightmare was starkly reflected in his vision.

At that moment, nearly a third of the white candles surrounding the coffin had been snuffed out, while a substantial portion still burned brightly.

In the flickering candlelight, the door creaked open. Lumian rapidly surveyed the area but found no other individuals present.

The three Hunters remained rooted by the door for over ten seconds.

Finally, Albus Medici turned his head and tauntingly asked, "Why aren't you guys going in?"

"Why did you stop too?" Elros Einhorn inquired instead of responding.

"We're waiting for you to take the lead," Lumian replied with a casual grin.

This hall was rife with danger and concealed profound secrets. Naturally, he wanted others to scout the path first!

Lumian realized he wasn't alone in thinking this. Albus and Elros shared similar sentiments.

Albus withdrew his gaze and let out a soft chuckle.

"Since you're all cowards, I'll have to do it myself."

With that, he abruptly dropped to one knee and placed his hands on the ground.

Silently, two crimson fire serpents darted toward the bronze coffin.

Hey! Lumian's eyes narrowed. He hadn't anticipated Albus would act so recklessly.

Assaulting the most problematic element without conducting any investigation?

Elros's expression froze as she instinctively extended her right hand, as if attempting to halt Albus.

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Chapter 431 - 431 Three Hunters, One Stage

431 Three Hunters, One Stage

Elros extended her right palm and unleashed a crimson fireball.

Amidst the rumbling, it engulfed the flaming serpents in its own explosion, halting their advance toward the bronze coffin.

Without further ado, Albus picked up the carbide lamp and rose to his feet.

He glanced at Elros and grinned.

“So you do know something?”

Albus then taunted Lumian,”You’re in the dark here.”

Dammit! If it weren’t for this inappropriate setting, I’d go head to head with you… Only now did Lumian realize that Albus’s recklessness had been a test and a trap.

“This is the Red Swan Castle of the Sauron family,” Elros replied, not directly addressing Albus but stating a simple fact.

She was implying that she had the Sauron family’s bloodline and had resided in Red Swan Castle for nearly six years. It was only natural for her to possess knowledge.

Albus shifted his gaze to the white candles, their flames nearly one-third extinguished, as if he hadn’t heard Elros. He asked straightforwardly, “What are you doing in the depths of this underground palace? If you don’t share, how can we cooperate and assist you?”

Elros looked at the bronze coffin and unexpectedly turned to Lumian, “I wish to explore this forbidden area, known as the family’s secret ground. Only a few are allowed inside to discover if the curse in our blood is connected to this place.”

“You’re an Einhorn. Do you genuinely consider yourself a Sauron family member?” Albus Medici taunted the lady.

This was both a dig at Elros for concealing the complete truth and an effort to sow discord between her and the Sauron family, making her aware of her place. So, there’s no need to help the Sauron family conceal those secrets? Lumian discerned

a double meaning in Albus's words.

This made him suspect that the other party might already be a Conspirer. His unlikable demeanor might be a disguised trap.

Unfazed, Elros sighed and said, "I bear half of the Sauron family's bloodline and am also a Hunter. I too will be haunted by that curse."

At this point, she turned her gaze towards Albus Medici and inquired, "What brings you to the depths of the underground palace? Don't tell me you're truly here to indulge in my naive cousin's childish games?"

Albus responded in a half-sigh, half-sincere tone, "It's time for the Sauron family's curse to come to an end.

"And to break this curse, we must first fathom the essence and origin of this curse."

"Is that so?" Elros no longer displayed the same obedience and restraint.

Albus chuckled.

I'd be a fool to take your word for it… Nevertheless, a true Conspirer doesn't just tell lies. They always reveal partial truths or even the whole truth. It's just that they omit the crucial parts… What was the truth in Albus Medici's response? Could it be that he genuinely wishes to help the Sauron family break the curse? If Elros were to say so, I'd believe her. How can an outsider like him, with no ties to the Sauron family, possess such kindness… Could it be a byproduct of pursuing his true objective? Lumian listened silently, dissecting the responses of his two "companions."

Her abrupt change in demeanor and her command over the giant black spiders didn't seem like something a young girl living in her grandfather's house would be capable of.

Elros and Albus evaluated Lumian's explanation with identical, almost mocking smiles. Then, they both turned to him and asked in unison, "Why did you venture into the depths of the underground palace?"

"Me?" Lumian pointed at himself with his free left hand and responded honestly, "Someone entrusted me with investigating the Sauron family's decline and provided me with something."

The "someone" referred to Gardner Martin, and the "something" pertained to the dangerous corruption at 13 Avenue du Marché, although Lumian didn't disclose whether he had accepted it.

Albus smiled, acknowledging the lie while being aware of Lumian's "true identity."

Elros's eyes flickered, swiftly assessing which parts of Lumian's words were true and which were lies or incomplete.

After a moment of silence, Lumian sighed and chided both Albus and Elros.

"You Hunters, despite all you've said, not a single one of you took a step forward!"

The three of them remained at the door, waiting for one another to step into the minefield.

"Talking to you guys is a waste of time." Albus sighed.

Nevertheless, he refrained from advancing. He clicked his tongue and added, "If only a Beyonder of the Sailor pathway were here at a time like this."

"Don't assume that Beyonders of the Sailor pathway are impulsive, reckless, and impatient. The potion may have an effect, but a person's character and experience are the most critical factors determining their actions. If you rely on such stereotypes for Beyonders of the Sailor pathway in the future, you may find yourself turned into a characteristic," Elros mocked Albus.

Lumian abstained from joining their debate and asked contemplatively, "If we hadn't chosen the middle path and the Door of Madness, would we still be here?"

"Yes, but some rooms are even more dangerous," Elros replied, her gaze fixed on the hall's surroundings.

Lumian nodded and asked, "Will we encounter demigod-level monsters?"

"Most of the demigod-level Beyonder characteristics have been retrieved. Many below the demigod level still linger in the underground palace, turning this place into a restricted hunting ground for members of the Sauron family seeking to improve themselves." Elros didn't seem inclined to conceal anything for the Sauron family.

Most of them have been retrieved… Does that mean some are still hidden in the depths of the underground palace? Did this coincide with the complete disappearance of some core members? Do the Sauron family not want to retrieve them, or are they incapable of doing so?

Indeed, Elros's description aligns with the Sauron family's current situation. There aren't many saint-level demigods, but it's still a substantial number. Many core members are scattered in the military, politics, and business world, holding significant influence… Are they lacking strength at a higher level? There are no angels, only a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact. Or is there just one angel? Lumian glanced around and realized that Elros and Albus remained remarkably patient, as if they had frozen in their spots.

Truth be told, Lumian was tempted to observe the outcomes of Elros and Albus, using their luck to gauge the danger of venturing deeper into the hall within the underground palace. However, given Elros's erratic temperament and the unnerving silence of Termiboros, he abandoned the idea.

Not only was it extremely risky, but it could also mislead him!

At that moment, Lumian suddenly felt a surge of danger.

He swiftly turned, his gaze following the glow of the carbide lamp, and Albus and Elros did the same.

In the diagonal corridor above, a hand with dark-red, almost black blood vessels extended from the darkness, pressing against the wall, illuminated by the faint yellowish glow.

In the bronze coffin, surrounded by white candles, a hand with dark-red, nearly black blood vessels suddenly extended, gripping a shriveled, blackened heart, from which blood oozed!

Has the menacing creature from the bronze coffin surfaced? Before Lumian could activate Spirit World Traversal, an intense fear overwhelmed him, as if it wanted him to yield, and he involuntarily bent forward.

Instinctively resisting and struggling, he, along with Albus and Elros, stepped back and entered the hall.

In an instant, an illusion materialized before their eyes.

Lumian "witnessed" the hall enveloped in surreal purple flames, akin to an inferno from myths and legends.

At the heart of the purple flames was the bronze coffin. It had turned transparent, as if it had lost its physical form, revealing an iron-black ring pressing down on it.

The ring was embedded in the ground, with viscous, bottomless blood-colored spring water in its center. In the spring water, shriveled and blackened hearts bobbed up and down.

Bloodlines extended from the iron-black ring. Some wound around the base of the bronze coffin and burrowed into it, while others connected to the white candles.

In the next moment, Lumian heard a frenzied and violent illusory roar, as if emanating from deep underground.

His mind reeled, and he lost consciousness.

…

In the boundless darkness, the bewildered Lumian faintly heard a majestic voice, but the words eluded his understanding.

In his stupor, he strained to discern the voice. Aurore's melodious song and the ethereal flute of the shepherds echoed in his ears.

"I'm the elf of spring…"

As the voices gradually grew more distinct, Lumian sensed searing heat in his right palm.

The intensity of the sensation was almost tangible, accompanied by a burning pain.

Pain… Pain! Lumian snapped out of his fugue and forced his eyes open.

Before him, a crimson fireball blazed, and he found himself encased within a metal framework, his body held upright.

At that moment, a man dressed in black robes, sporting a vivid red beard that made him look like a human-lion hybrid, stood before the metal frame. He held softened candles and pressed them against Lumian's body, one by one.

Without hesitation, Lumian activated the black mark on his right shoulder.

With a ghostly flicker, he vanished from the metal frame, along with a portion of the candles.

Lumian materialized swiftly at the entrance to Red Swan Castle's underground labyrinth.

He hastily scanned the surroundings and breathed a sigh of relief, seeing that everything seemed normal.

Without delay, Lumian brushed the wax from his body and examined his belongings.

To his astonishment, not only were the original mystical items, gold coins, banknotes, and various lotions intact, but even the Beyonder characteristic of the wax figure artisan and the shriveled heart he had obtained in the underground palace remained.

No one searched me? Amid his bewilderment, fragmented memories flitted through his mind.

He recalled scenes of himself walking in silence through the darkness without his carbide lamp.

In those images, his countenance appeared lifeless and rigid, like that of a wax figure.

Eventually, he reached a room and nestled within a metal framework, calmly awaiting the wax figure artisan's transformation.

This doesn't resemble me at all… Lumian rubbed his throbbing head and opted to ascend the stairs, departing the underground labyrinth.

He promptly returned to the first-floor living room, where he found the poet, Iraeta, happily sipping absinthe.

"You're back too?" Iraeta inquired with curiosity.

"Yes," Lumian replied, having regained his composure, as he settled onto the sofa and offered a smile. "I got separated from them."

As he finished speaking, Albus, with his fiery red hair, made his appearance at the living room door.

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Chapter 432 - 432 Beatdown

432 Beatdown

Albus was caught off guard when he spotted Lumian comfortably seated on the sofa.

“That was quick.”

“You’re not slow either,” Lumian replied with a “kind” smile.

From his point of view, breaking free from the ethereal, underground roar and not turning into a wax statue indicated that Albus wasn’t just an ordinary member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order. Perhaps the sinister corruption at 13 Avenue du Marché was helping him withstand that terrifying roar.

In contrast, Elros Einhorn, with her unique Sauron family bloodline, seemed more likely to emerge unscathed and return safely.

Albus flashed a smile, pulled up a chair, and casually enjoyed some refreshments as though nothing out of the ordinary had occurred. He signaled the servant nearby to replace his tea with a fresh cup of black tea.

After about four to five minutes, both Lumian and Albus simultaneously shifted their attention towards the living room door.

Elros, dressed in a comfortable dress, entered the room.

Seeing Lumian and Albus, she appeared surprised but not shocked. She quickly put on a polite, obedient smile.

Elros resumed her seat, becoming once again the reserved girl staying at her maternal grandfather’s house.

Poet Iraeta seemed oblivious to the unusual atmosphere. He sipped his absinthe and discussed poetry writing with Lumian.

Fifteen minutes later, Count Poufer, decked out in a scarlet velvet coat, returned to the living room with Novelist Anori and Painter Mullen.

When Poufer laid eyes on Lumian, the owner of Red Swan Castle was visibly taken aback, nearly losing control of his expression.

He never anticipated encountering Ciel Dubois again, or more accurately, Ciel Dubois in his present state!

Shortly after, Poufer's gaze swept across Albus, Elros, and Iraeta, his face reflecting shock and suspicion as if he had stepped into a surreal dream.

"Ah, Poufer, you're finally back. We had given up on the adventure long ago and decided not to delve deeper into the dark maze." Albus set aside his mille-feuille and warmly welcomed him. "How did it go? Did you manage to locate the Count's crown?"

Instinctively, Poufer shifted his body to prevent Albus, with his hands smeared in pastry flakes, from giving him a hug.

He managed to force a smile and replied, "We had no luck finding it either. When did you get back?"

"Less than half an hour ago." Only then did Albus remember to smack his hands and brush off the pastry crumbs.

Lumian rose from his seat and inquired, "Where's Monsieur Ernst Young?"

Novelist Anori shook his head.

"He got separated from us. I hope he remembers to pull the bell rope and summon the servants to find him."

"That's correct. The servants in this castle know the underground palace better than I do," Poufer remarked, his expression returning to its usual state as he settled into an armchair.

Lumian was eager to return and confirm his discoveries. He glanced at the antique wall clock hanging on the wall and smiled at Poufer.

"I still have some matters to attend to, so I won't be attending the banquet tonight."

Poufer's mind seemed preoccupied, and he didn't press Lumian to stay. He rose once more and escorted Lumian to the living room's exit.

Lumian cast a grateful look at the owner of Red Swan Castle and shook his hand with sincerity.

"Count, thank you for a fantastic afternoon. I thoroughly enjoyed this game. I hope we can play it again."

From the depths of his heart, Lumian wanted to express his gratitude to Poufer Sauron. Not only had he provided an "opportunity" to digest the potion, but he had also "unveiled" the family's hunting grounds, making it easier for Lumian to locate suspected Beyonder creatures related to Conspirers without extensive searching.

How could he not show his appreciation?

Of course, Lumian genuinely desired to eliminate Poufer Sauron. If not for his uniqueness, he would have been turned into a wax statue.

Lumian's sole reason for not launching a direct attack wasn't concern about Sauron family retaliation or fear of spoiling the Iron and Blood Cross Order's plans. Instead, he instinctively believed that even though Poufer Sauron appeared to be an ordinary person or a relatively weak Beyonder with limited knowledge, if Lumian were to confront him, he might well be the one facing danger.

Count Poufer's expression soured as he received the heartfelt gratitude.

Lumian appeared oblivious to this and reiterated his desire to partake in another underground palace adventure game. With that, he turned and exited the living room, leaving Poufer Sauron perplexed and watchful.

After departing from Red Swan Castle and boarding the four-wheeled, four-seater borrowed from Gardner Martin, Lumian's smile faded, replaced by a solemn countenance.

At the conclusion of this underground palace adventure, he had gained a clear understanding of the disparity between his strength and that of higher-level entities. With a mere illusory roar, he lost consciousness and self-control, unable to resist.

Only thanks to Mr. Fool's seal, Termiboros's presence, and the lingering aura of the Blood Emperor Alista Tudor did he manage to escape with his life.

My Sequence is still too low… Lumian sighed inwardly and closed his eyes, reflecting on the adventure's details.

…

Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, 11 Rue des Fontaines.

Gardner Martin leisurely roamed through the armor and weapons on display in the hall, running his fingers over the metallic textures as Lumian recounted his encounters in the depths of the underground palace. He described the room with the wax statues, the wax statue artisan, the mutated black spider, the iron soldiers, the bronze coffin, the white candles, and the eerie roar.

However, Lumian omitted the details of how he had escorted Poet Iraeta back to the underground palace's entrance. He also left out the part about burning the wax statues and him murdering the wax statue artisan.

Finally, he couldn't conceal his anger, frustration, and perplexity.

"Commanding Officer, didn't you promise to secretly watch to prevent any mishaps? If I hadn't inexplicably awakened, I'd be a wax statue now!

"Did you use Albus to keep an eye on me?"

Lumian's questioning tone didn't seem to provoke Gardner Martin. The latter turned to him, his smile widening as he spoke calmly.

"I was indeed observing from the shadows."

At this point, his smile grew even more, but his voice remained composed.

"I witnessed you escorting the poet back to the underground palace's entrance. I saw you set fire to the wax statues in that room and detonate the wax statue artisan's head."

Wh— Lumian's eyes narrowed, and a shiver ran down his spine as his hair stood on end.

He blurted out, "Albus is already back?"

How did the Boss find out about my actions?

Could he truly be trailing me in secret or monitoring my every move in the underground maze?

How did he do it? I didn't notice at all!

Gardner Martin chuckled.

"Albus hasn't returned yet."

It wasn't Albus? That's right, Albus had no knowledge of my actions regarding the wax statue artisan's demise. No one else was present… How did the Boss discover it? Lumian's usual tendency to underestimate Gardner Martin vanished, replaced by a sense that the head of the Savoie Mob, the Commanding Officer of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, possessed more mystery and power than he initially believed.

Previously, perhaps Madam Magician of the Tarot Club and Mr. K of the Aurora Order had displayed abilities that Lumian found beyond imagination or awe-inspiring. Therefore, when facing Gardner Martin, who appeared to be the weakest of the three "superiors," Lumian had always considered him less formidable. He even believed that if they were within a five-meter range, he might have a chance to eliminate this Commanding Officer.

Now, from the looks of it, Lumian wasn't confident.

Considering that Gardner Martin might have revealed this information to unnerve him, Lumian didn't attempt to conceal his changing expressions and body language.

Gardner Martin observed Lumian's bewildered and fearful expression and added with a smile, "Do you really think you woke up for no reason?"

Whoa, so you're the one who helped? If I hadn't heard the grandiose voice, Aurore's humming, and the conversation with the people in Cordu and felt the burning pain in my right palm, I would have believed you… In essence, the corruption at 13 Avenue du Marché could have helped me break free from that state, but the Boss had intentionally left it ambiguous. He wants me to believe that he had played a role. This Hunter didn't lie, but he certainly didn't disclose the whole truth. How much of what he said was based on what he saw with his own eyes, and how much was gathered through other means? Lumian's thoughts raced as he bowed his head.

"Thank you, Commanding Officer."

Gardner Martin nodded warmly with a smile and said, "We've gained something from this operation. At the very least, we know that there are terrifying items sealed deep in Red Swan Castle's underground palace. Do you want to exchange them for rewards or save them to trade for valuable items later, such as higher Sequence potions?"

Lumian had accumulated a sum of 20,000 verl d'or over the past month through Gardner Martin's funds, his "salary" from Salle de Bal Brise, and his earnings from acting. Money wasn't an immediate concern.

He pondered for a moment.

"Let's save them for now."

As he spoke, he presented the Beyonder characteristic of the wax statue artisan and other items to Gardner Martin and inquired, "Boss, can I use these to concoct the Conspirer potion?"

Gardner Martin examined the shrunken blood-colored brain and the shriveled, blackened heart for a moment.

"When combined, they can be used to concoct the Conspirer potion, but they will have additional Hunter, Provoker, and Pyromaniac characteristics compared to ordinary ingredients. You need to be very confident before using them.

"Right, this heart still retains traces of the Sauron family's bloodline, which might affect your advancement to some extent. If you're not confident, I can provide you with a Conspirer potion in exchange for these ingredients and make up the difference. Consider it a partial reward."

In essence, ordinary Black Hunting Spiders and Sphinxes only possess the Conspirer Beyonder characteristic, excluding the ones from before. The wax statue artisan and the mutated black spider were like two halves of a Conspirer. When combined, they formed a complete Sequence 9 to 6 Beyonder… Lumian grasped the situation and smiled.

"It sounds like it will make me stronger. I'd like to see if I can handle the associated risks."

Gardner Martin didn’t push further and allowed Lumian to depart.

…

Upon returning to Auberge du Coq Doré, Lumian took his place at his desk and began writing a letter to Madam Magician.

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Chapter 433 - 433 Secret Past

433 Secret Past

Lumian diligently wrote down every detail of the events that had unfolded from the moment Lumian set foot in Red Swan Castle. He condensed the communications, focusing on the key points.

He had a strong sense that the Sauron family's underground maze concealed a crucial secret. Fearing that he might lack the knowledge and write off problematic parts as normal, inadvertently overlooking something, he decided to mention everything and allow Madam Magician to assess it herself.

It took Lumian half an hour to draft the letter.

He then closed the curtains and performed a ritual, summoning the "doll" messenger.

After nearly twenty minutes, the messenger returned with two folded squares of letter paper.

There are actually two pages. She places quite a lot of importance on this… Lumian contemplated for a moment before silently unfolding them.

"Gardner Martin is correct. The so-called wax statue artisan and mutated black spider are actually an enhanced Sphinx and Black Hunting Spider respectively. They contain Beyonder characteristics of the previous Sequences. What he didn't mention is that using the heart not only affects your advancement but is also linked to a special ritual that causes Beyonders who use it to merge with some of the Sauron family's bloodline, potentially subjecting them to a curse. However, for you, there's nothing to worry about. You've already taken the role of emperor during the King's Pie game. Why should you fear this?

"That tiny trace of the Sauron family's bloodline might have an undiscovered significance at some point."

Undiscovered significance… Is Madam Magician hinting at something she observed in her astromancy? If I genuinely use that withered heart to concoct the potion, not only will I possess a hint of the Blood Emperor's aura, but I'll also have a bit of the Sauron family's bloodline. What kind of f*cking amalgamation would this be!? Lumian mercilessly mocked himself.

If he further possessed an Einhorn bloodline, Lumian wouldn't even dare to imagine whether he'd be considered a prodigy in the Hunter pathway or simply mediocre.

After this self-mockery, Lumian continued to read.

“You’ve gained a lot from this adventure. Combining your experiences, what you’ve witnessed, what you’ve heard, and what you’ve encountered in the previous two King’s Pie games, my initial assessment is that the formidable angel Vermonda Champagne Sauron from 200 years ago is still alive. He resides somewhere underground in that chamber, confined within a bronze coffin, surrounded by white candles, iron-black rings, blood-colored spring water, and the hearts extracted from the Sauron family’s core members through a unique ritual. Even the entire underground maze is linked to a perilous Sealed Artifacts, designed to limit Vermonda Sauron’s movements to the greatest extent.

“This is the first victim of the Sauron family’s curse. Why did He vanish suddenly, why did He descend underground, and why does He remain alive? It has had a profound impact on generations of Red Swan Castle and the Sauron family, driving them to the brink of insanity. This is a crucial matter that requires further clarification. It’s the real cause behind the Sauron family’s decline.

“It’s too dangerous for you. At your Sequence, you would find it extremely challenging to investigate. As you’ve experienced, even hearing Vermonda Sauron’s voice causes temporary disorientation, leaving you in a daze, and the wax statue artisan would reconstruct you. This prevents you from getting close to the bronze coffin and the seal over it.

“Of course, once you possess a trace of the Sauron family’s bloodline and master the special ritual that Poufer Sauron once underwent, you might have a chance to enter that chamber. But all in all, I advise against taking this risk until you’re prepared to advance to Sequence 4 and approach the threshold of godhood. If Gardner Martin assigns a similar mission in the future, just perform it perfunctorily.

“Considering your contributions, the next time you require a potion formula or specific ingredients, feel free to contact me directly. You’ll receive a substantial discount.”

Angel? Lumian’s eyelids twitched.

The mysterious and missing Sauron family ancestor, Vermonda, was, in fact, a formidable angel!

The voice that had instantaneously robbed him of consciousness and nearly caused him to faint belonged to a genuine Mythical Creature!

Furthermore, this angel remained in a state of complete madness and needed to be sealed.

The Sauron family’s underground maze is indeed a perilous place, but it also conceals a wealth of “treasures”… Lumian muttered with a mix of lingering fear and anticipation.

In reality, even without Madam Magician's advice, he had no desire to risk approaching the chamber with the bronze coffin.

What if Poufer Sauron was waiting there next time, and he ended up losing himself, only to be killed?

It appeared that the mission to investigate the cause of the Sauron family's decline could only progress once he grew stronger.

Of course, Gardner Martin could handle it himself or seek assistance from the vice presidents of the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

After digesting these paragraphs, Lumian exhaled and continued reading the last part of the letter.

"Albus Medici isn't as straightforward as he may seem—not just a member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order. His last name is self-explanatory.

"In ancient times, before Blood Emperor Alista Tudor became the Red Priest, the God of War had another name. He was one of the eight Kings of Angels who had once served under the Ancient Sun God, known as the Red Angel or War Angel Medici.

"One of His duties was to watch over and instruct Amon."

King of Angels… How do they differ from regular angels? The Ancient Sun God's impact on the future was profoundly significant. The one revered by the Aurora Order, some of the seven orthodox gods, Amon, and the former God of War, Medici… Lumian pondered, realizing that many issues of the current era might trace back to events two to three thousand years ago, linked to the Ancient Sun God's downfall.

His curiosity was piqued, and he read the remainder of the content with greater focus than before.

"Red Angel Medici, the Sauron family, and the Einhorn family's most ancient ancestor all perished simultaneously under Alista Tudor and the nobles' combined efforts, giving rise to the Red Priest. However, after the Blood Emperor's demise, the Sauron and Einhorn families reclaimed their Beyonder characteristics.

"A King of Angels doesn't meet His end so easily. For some reason, the Red Angel, Sauron, and Einhorn merged into a potent evil spirit, a fusion of malevolence. Just a few years ago, this evil spirit found a means to break free from the geographical confines, vanishing without a trace from its place of origin.

"Red Angel Medici left behind numerous descendants and established a secretive angelic lineage, with many residing in Bansy Harbor. Yes, the same Bansy Harbor I mentioned earlier, which was greatly corrupted and directly annihilated by the Church of Storms. However, over the past one to two thousand years, members of the Medici family have gradually departed the island and returned to the Northern

Continent. Albus Medici should be a direct descendant of one such individual.

“It’s reasonable to suspect that Albus may have already crossed paths with this evil spirit. Removing the Sauron family’s curse could be part of the evuk spirit’s agenda, and the portion linked to Red Angel Medici likely desires the Sauron family’s hoarded possessions. They also seek to uncover what Vermonda Sauron experienced.

“As for Albus’s presence at the Sacred Heart Cloister, it might be due to the evil spirit guiding him or the Iron and Blood Cross Order sensing an anomaly and sending him to establish contact with the monks and gather information.

“Don’t worry, Miss Justice and Susie will keep a close watch.”

There’s an issue with the Sacred Heart Cloister… Lumian hadn’t foreseen problems with the Eternal Blazing Sun Church’s largest cloister in Trier, but Madam Magician’s words had unmistakably highlighted this situation.

Previously, when he speculated about Albus’s purpose at the Sacred Heart Cloister, he had engaged in extensive analysis, yet he hadn’t contemplated an issue with the cloister itself. He had merely assumed that Gardner Martin was seeking to understand certain matters there and gauge the inclinations and attitudes of various Eternal Blazing Sun Church factions.

Combined with Madam Magician’s statement that someone from the Tarot Club was monitoring a potential lead, Lumian now suspected that the issue with the Sacred Heart Cloister might be linked to the worship of an evil god!

A substantial crisis is brewing… Lumian’s sense of urgency surged.

At the end of the letter, Madam Magician wrote:

“Perhaps Gardner Martin’s ability to ‘see’ something in the underground maze is related to his exposure to the corruption at 13 Avenue du Marché. It could also be due to the item smuggled in through Rat. I don’t know what it is exactly.

“Consume the potion soon and advance to Sequence 6. If the catastrophe is averted unsuccessfully in the future, teleport out of Trier with the Two of Cups and your friends, or seek refuge in Mr. Fool’s cathedral.”

Lumian read the reply and contemplated it for a moment, silently watching it consumed by the crimson flames.

…

3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, Apartment 601.

Franca, clad in a cotton shirt and light-colored pants, looked surprised when she saw Lumian outside the door.

“Didn’t Poufer Sauron’s banquet just begin?”

Why did he return so suddenly?

“I ventured into Red Swan Castle’s underground maze this afternoon and gained quite a bit,” Lumian replied with a smile as he entered the room and closed the door. “I need your help now.”

“What did you gain? And how can I help?” Franca inquired, a mix of curiosity and confusion in her expression.

Lumian chose to address the latter question.

“Help me hold something. If something goes wrong after I consume the potion, open it immediately.”

“Consume the potion?” Franca was taken aback. “Have you finished digesting your Pyromaniac potion?”

“The digestion is complete,” Lumian affirmed with a smile.

Franca instinctively asked, “Have you gathered all the ingredients for your Conspirer potion?”

“Yes,” Lumian replied with a grin.

“…” Franca couldn’t help but mutter, “You’ve only been out for an afternoon, but it feels like you’ve been gone for two to three weeks…”

Not only had the Pyromaniac potion been fully digested, but he had also acquired most of the ingredients for the subsequent potion!

Lumian showed an unusual sincerity as he explained, “This is all thanks to nature —no, thanks to Poufer Sauron.”

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Chapter 434 - 434 Utilizing the Special Environment

434 Utilizing the Special Environment

In a dim tunnel supported by stone pillars, Franca, indifferent to the presence of carbide lamps, turned to Lumian and expressed her concern.

“Are you absolutely sure there won’t be any issues with using that heart to advance? Even if you don’t appear afraid of the Sauron family’s curse, it could still affect your condition after consuming the potion and potentially lead to failure. Honestly, Gardner’s proposal is worth considering. Consuming an additional Sequence 9 to Sequence 7 potion will make you stronger, but not by much. There won’t be any qualitative changes, so it’s better to take a safer route.”

The Demoness of Pleasure had already learned about Lumian’s experiences in Red Swan Castle’s underground maze and most of the information from Madam Magician’s letter.

While she was awed by the special soldiers’ existence and the frenzied cries of the uncontrollable angel, she couldn’t help but be concerned about Lumian’s plan to use the Beyonder characteristic of the wax statue artisan and the shriveled heart of the mutated black spider to concoct the potion.

Lumian, holding a carbide lamp, chuckled.

“I’m doing it because I’m more than confident.”

Franca remained skeptical. “Do you have a method to negate the influence of the heart’s remaining bloodline?”

At this point, it was as if she snapped out of her reverie.

“Where are we headed? Aren’t you going to drink the potion? Just find a quiet spot. There’s no need to keep wandering underground, right?”

Lumian chuckled.

“It’s precisely because the destination is special that I believe I can minimize the influence of the Sauron family’s residual bloodline in the heart.”

Simultaneously, it would reduce the risk of the corruption in his body during the advancement!

Franca's curiosity was piqued. "Where are we going?"

Lumian replied with a smile, "You'll find out when we get there."

"Dammit! I hate people like you who leave sentences hanging!" Franca couldn't resist cursing.

…

After more than half an hour, Franca pointed ahead to a naturally formed and modified stone door cave, her expression a mix of surprise and realization. She asked, "Is this the destination you were talking about?"

The entrance was marked with numerous engravings of skulls, skeletal arms, sunflowers, and symbols related to steam.

This marked the entrance to the catacombs, leading to the Death Empire!

"Somewhere inside," Lumian replied. He retrieved a white candle from the satchel containing the Flog boxing gloves and tossed it to Franca. With a smile, he added, "I want to consume the potion under the watchful eyes of God."

"Under the gaze of God?" Franca eyed Lumian suspiciously, wondering if he had succumbed to the peculiar habits of an Astrologer.

He didn't seem to be speaking in a straightforward manner!

Lumian chose not to elaborate. Instead, he lit a white candle and ventured into the catacombs.

As usual, the administrators challenged them, and they made their assurances. The two eventually reached the third level of the catacombs, where they encountered a sacrificial pillar composed of two weathered boulders, surrounded by a small square.

Upon entering this remarkably clean area, Franca had an epiphany.

"Are you trying to exploit the uniqueness of this place?"

She had previously explored the catacombs but hadn't ventured deep into the third level. Lumian had only mentioned that there was a square here with two sacrificial pillars symbolizing the Eternal Blazing Sun and the God of Steam and Machinery.

Under the protection of these two pillars, even if the candle flames in their hands were extinguished, the individuals in the square wouldn't be plunged into darkness, and there wouldn't be any trace of their presence erased.

"Yes." Lumian smiled.

He handed the white candle to Franca and approached the mottled pillar adorned with symbols like the Sun Sacred Emblem, sunflowers, and radiating lines. He extended his arms reverently and offered a sincere prayer.

“Praise the Sun!”

His plan was to utilize the catacombs’ uniqueness and the protective power of the sacrificial square to suppress the influence of the Sauron family’s residual bloodline and the corruption of Inevitability within his body.

From his experiences, a substantial part of these influences stemmed from external sources and the outside world. For instance, the sealed Vermonda Sauron deep within the underground palace and the power of Inevitability beyond the barrier.

Without these external influences, all that would remain was the corruption within his body. Lumian had endured this during his previous three advancements and believed it was manageable. This was because the external support this corruption received would be weakened by the catacombs’ uniqueness and the protection of the sacrificial pillars.

The initial idea for this plan had been inspired by the creation of the Beyonder accessory, Beatrice’s Necklace. Madam Magician had mentioned that specific environments could sever connections and prevent the power of a boon from returning to its source, such as the area around the Samaritan Women’s Spring.

Lumian believed that although the sacrificial square in the catacombs might not be as special as the area around the Samaritan Women’s Spring, it wouldn’t be too far off. After considering the catacombs’ peculiarity and the protection of the Eternal Blazing Sun sacrificial pillar, the external influence would undoubtedly be significantly reduced.

Furthermore, the sanctity of the sacrificial square stemmed from the protection of orthodox gods. Lumian didn’t need to worry about any backlash from consuming the potion to advance here.

Franca watched in momentary surprise as Lumian genuinely praised the Sun.

He was truly under the “watchful eye” of a deity!

But isn’t he afraid of being directly purged as a follower of Mr. Fool?

After the prayer, Lumian returned to Franca and handed her an exquisite perfume bottle.

“What’s this?” Franca inquired, puzzled.

“Gray amber perfume,” Lumian explained with a flicker of emotion in his eyes under the candlelight. “After I consume the potion, watch my reaction closely. If you sense anything amiss, unscrew the cap and bring the bottle to my nose.”

Initially, he would have done this himself, but this time, given the influence of the Sauron family's residual bloodline and his status as a Mid-Sequence Beyonder, he was concerned that the situation might worsen. He might not have the strength to open the perfume bottle. Additionally, if he had used it from the beginning, his subconscious might remember that he had created it, potentially negating the intended effect.

"Alright." Seeing that Lumian had no intention of explaining, Franca suppressed her curiosity and refrained from inquiring.

Lumian glanced at the broad stone steps leading to the catacombs' second level and added,

"One more thing, you need to ensure that the tourists don't disturb me."

"Do you think I'm stupid?" Franca rolled her eyes.

Did you really need to ask?

Without further delay, Lumian retrieved a beer mug with a crystal-like appearance from his satchel.

Using a measuring cylinder, he began the process. First, he poured a total of 80 milliliters of the wax statue artisan's dark-red blood into the mug. Then, he added the mutated black spider's poison gland, 10 grams of amber powder, and two white oak fruits he had collected over a month ago.

These ingredients, infused with potent spirituality and corresponding symbols, didn't dissolve instantly; instead, they created a dark foam on the surface.

Lumian gently submerged the blood-colored object that resembled a shrunken human brain and the withered, black heart into the mixture.

With a sizzling sound, a crimson-tinged mist diffused and then receded. All the solid ingredients rapidly disintegrated and merged, causing the potion's color to intensify.

Bubbles rose and burst until the liquid inside the beer mug turned an iron-black hue, with a tinge of reddish rust.

Observing this transformation, Franca mumbled softly, "Indeed, one's heart is tainted when one employs battle strategies. Even the potion is tainted…"

Contemplating the dark, blood-colored concoction, Lumian removed his satchel and military flask, setting them aside.

After handing Lie to Franca, he took a slow, deliberate breath and composed himself.

After 20 to 30 seconds, he sat cross-legged, his wrist steady as he picked up the beer mug and drank the potion without hesitation.

The potion had a strong rusty taste, cold like a serpent slithering in the darkness, slippery and icy.

However, Lumian's body didn't burn as it had before. Instead, he felt a chilling sensation, as if all the flames had been absorbed by the potion.

Simultaneously, his head throbbed with a familiar pain, and his vision quickly blurred. All the thoughts and information he knew materialized, intertwining in the form of miniature pictures, forming layers of interconnected spiderwebs.

This tore Lumian's mind apart. Terrifying ravings, seemingly emanating from an infinite distance while simultaneously echoing in his ears, were accompanied by violent and frenzied emotions.

Yet, the pain from the former didn't render Lumian nearly unconscious. He instinctively rolled, his expression involuntarily contorted with malevolence. His hands clenched tightly, and he couldn't help but groan in pain. The latter was within the tolerance of an Alms Monk.

Lumian's right palm felt a slight warmth from the stimulation.

Finally, the inferno reached him. This time, it converged within Lumian's mind, unreal and illusory.

Franca, who had been watching closely, wanted to open the perfume bottle several times, but each time she thought about it, Lumian returned to normal.

The entire ordeal lasted only 20 to 30 seconds. Lumian's clenched hands slowly relaxed, and his contorted facial muscles gradually returned to their original positions.

Phew… Lumian exhaled a scorching breath and opened his eyes.

"Did it work?" Franca asked subconsciously.

Lumian, experiencing sharp pain in his head and body, responded with a wry smile, "If it hadn't worked, you would've already started fighting the out-of-control me."

This had been even easier than his previous three advancements.

"Who knows if a Conspirer's loss of control is an act of pretending to be a normal person and secretly attacking me…" Franca couldn't help but argue, even though she knew she had spoken out of turn.

Lumian raised his hand to rub his temples. Despite the pain, his thoughts seemed clearer than ever.

He quickly recalled the events that had occurred and sensed that some of the details might be problematic.

This was something he hadn’t noticed before.

For instance, according to his nightmares, Iraeta, the poet who frequently participated in King’s Pie games, should have transformed into a half-wax statue, gone insane, harmed himself or those around him at any moment. Yet, not only was he unscathed, but he had also entered the problematic Sacred Heart Cloister and coincidentally encountered Albus Medici!

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Chapter 435 - 435 An Early Acting Principle

435 An Early Acting Principle

In the nightmare, Poet Iraeta failed to escape his deranged fate. It's not that he isn't affected by the King's Pie game, but that he hasn't shown it yet. Just like Painter Mullen and Novelist Anori…

He has a facilitator behind him, ensuring his current safety and allowing him to transmit effective information? If that's the case, who is the facilitator? Someone from the Sacred Heart Cloister? Did he make many similar arrangements after discovering the turbulent undercurrents in the cloister? Lumian's thoughts raced faster than usual, and he quickly made a guess.

He retracted his thoughts and focused on observing the changes in his body after consuming the potion.

In addition to his enhanced insight, sharper and clearer thinking, and a series of specific manifestations, like improved intelligence and the ability to fabricate excuses to convince others, he also had superpowers in misdirection, confusion, and deception.

These abilities were core components of conspiracies, but a qualified Conspirer would only employ them subtly and at critical moments. Under normal circumstances, they tried their best to rely on their wits to prevent targets with backgrounds from detecting the existence of superpowers and seeing through their schemes.

Similar to Misleading, there's another ability called Incitement or Instigation. This is very much like the Demoness' Instigation. And when Lumian played Pyromaniac, he consciously incited others to ignite the flames in their hearts.

Lumian couldn't help but mutter, Is my acting too advanced, or is the Hunter pathway deepening in certain concepts? Is acting in a previous stage an ability at the later stages?

Yes, the Conspirer potion revolves around conspiracies. There's no qualitative improvement in combat…

After repeated confirmation, Lumian realized that his physique had improved to a certain extent, and his precise control over flames had improved. He no longer had to rely on Fire Raven, Fireball, Spear, Fire Serpent, and Fire Wall every time. He could casually shape the flames into different forms, such as whips and sabers.

Similarly, the difficulty of repeatedly compressing the crimson flames to form incandescent white flames decreased. The time required was significantly reduced and, depending on the flame's specific appearance and energy density, it ranged from one to three seconds.

In addition, Lumian could temporarily merge his body with fire. He could use fireballs and other projectiles to quickly shift positions, either escaping the enemy's attack range or closing the distance. This allowed Lumian to have more options in battle. He didn't have to rely on Spirit World Traversal every time.

Conspirer had also enhanced his spirituality. Although Lumian hadn't experimented, he believed that at his limit, he could complete Spirit World Traversal six times, up from the original four times.

Lumian sniffed and unsurprisingly caught a whiff of something further away, discerning more details.

This was due to the enhancement of a Conspirer's information-gathering abilities. It would inevitably enhance their five senses and spiritual perception.

That's about it… Lumian stood up, his body suddenly enveloped in flowing crimson flames.

He transformed into a fireball and flew away with a whoosh.

In less than ten meters, he landed on the ground, and flames dispersed around him.

The current limit is ten meters. It will gradually increase as the potion is digested… Lumian nodded indiscernibly and returned to the spot where he had discarded the black satchel and the military flask.

He was now fully aware that he was already a Sequence 6 Conspirer.

Franca held Lie and the gray amber perfume and asked with curiosity and concern, "Very cool… How do you feel?"

"That's normal," Franca consoled, empathetic. "For most pathways, there are only two qualitative changes below the high Sequences. For the Hunter pathway, one is at Sequence 7 Pyromaniac, and the other is at Sequence 5 Reaper. Regardless, each potion brings about new abilities or strengthening of the original abilities. If used well, it's normal for a Sequence 6 to kill a Sequence 5."

"I also discovered that I've been acting as a Conspirer for a long time…"

When he was wandering, he relied on ruthlessness and conspiracies to fend off humans who were older than him for food and a place to sleep in the cold. When he was in Cordu, every prank could be regarded as a conspiracy with low malice. After leaving Cordu, he had been trapped in conspiracies over the past few months, either screwing over his targets or falling into the traps of others…

Although Lumian didn't digest a portion of the Conspirer potion on the spot, it made his condition much better compared to when he first consumed the Pyromaniac potion. The potion's potency didn't dissipate without control.

He didn't feel like a Conspirer who had just advanced after consuming a potion. He felt more like a Sequence 6 Beyonder who had some time to adapt to it.

Simultaneously, he deduced two acting principles from his past experiences:

Firstly, a Conspirer's core lay in their intelligence, not superpowers!

Secondly, the key to a conspiracy lay in concealing one's true motives!

In the past, the acting principles were derived step by step, leading to a substantial digestion of the potion. In contrast, these two acting principles were accumulated from past experiences. Although they couldn't directly result in the digestion of the potion, they facilitated Lumian's subsequent acting, reducing the time it would take for him to fully digest the potion. To put it simply, he might only need to spend half his energy to achieve twice the effect.

Lumian had originally believed that digesting the Conspirer potion would take at least half a year, but from the looks of it, perhaps three months would suffice. Of course, the prerequisite was that there would always be a chance to act and conclude a new acting principle.

Franca shared his sentiments.

"That's right. Just like how it was easy for me to act as an Assassin. I had too much 'experience.'"

When she said the word "experience," her voice involuntarily softened, as if she felt a little guilty.

Lumian paid no mind to this detail. After stuffing the items on the ground into his black satchel, he retrieved Lie, the gray amber perfume, and the burning white candle.

Seeing that her companion was indeed fine, Franca heaved a sigh of relief and said, "It's a good thing to advance before the catastrophe. Damn it, if it weren't for Browns Sauron being petty and jealous of me, preventing me from attending the orgies, my Pleasure potion would have been significantly digested. Hmph, I'll have her experience true pleasure later!"

For the 103rd time, she cursed Browns Sauron.

Franca then asked, "Are we going to make a move on those individuals next?"

These individuals referred to members of the Sinners organization.

Over the past month, Lumian had repeatedly sought to capture the Sinners' liaison through Guillaume Bénet's widow, Paulina. First, he sought to uncover the Sanson family, seeking revenge for his sister and tracking Loki's whereabouts—they had a deep connection to Loki. Perhaps they knew the location of the castle where Loki had been resurrected. Second, the Sinners organization also believed in an evil god. It was possible they knew a little about Trier's cultists' abnormal silence. Perhaps it could help Lumian and the others figure out the source of the disaster and the essence of the outbreak.

Back then, Lumian hadn't figured out the pattern of the Sinners organization's liaison, so he had postponed any operation. Later, he planned to wait until he advanced to Sequence 6 and gained greater strength before taking action. After all, other members of the Sinners organization weren't like Padre Guillaume Bénet, whose contract abilities and corresponding negative effects were grasped by him, allowing him to prepare in advance. If the contract abilities of the evil god bestowed synergized well, they would be quite a tough nut.

Of course, Lumian had no intention of completely annihilating the Sinners organization by relying solely on his small team. It was a cult with a saint. His plan was to capture the liaison and obtain the information he needed before calling the Tarot Club for reinforcements.

"That's right." Lumian nodded with a smile and replied to Franca, "In two days, the Sinners' liaison will likely visit Madame Paulina again."

"Yes, I hope he knows something." Although Franca didn't think she could prevent the potential disaster, she still hoped to do something.

She paused for a moment and continued, "Take Jenna to Lavigny Docks tomorrow and introduce her to Mr. Fool's faith."

…

The following morning, Lumian knocked on Apartment 601's door.

He glanced at Jenna, who had changed into a light-blue dress, and smiled.

"I need your help with something."

"Me?" Jenna pointed at herself and turned to Franca. "How can I help?"

"Don't ask. You'll find out when you get there." Lumian couldn't be bothered to find an excuse.

Jenna's eyes darted around in confusion.

"Dammit! Can't you make yourself clear?" As she cursed, she gestured to Franca, indicating her helplessness.

Then, she followed Lumian out of the apartment door.

Franca fell into deep thought when she saw this scene.

…

In the four-wheeled, four-seater rental carriage, Lumian didn't mention the purpose of his trip. He chatted with Jenna about the drunkards at Salle de Bal Brise and the actors at Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons. The atmosphere was relaxed and cheerful, as if they were on a school autumn outing.

Jenna didn't inquire further and displayed considerable patience.

Finally, the rental carriage arrived at Lavigny Docks. Lumian paid the fare of 1.75 verl d'or, opened the door, and agilely leaped out.

Jenna moved to the carriage door, but before she could gracefully leap down, her eyes narrowed as she let out Franca's usual sigh.

"Wow!"

Lumian followed her gaze and saw an ancient-looking three-masted sailboat parked at Lavigny Docks, clearly lagging behind the times.

Such a boat was rare at Lavigny Docks, but those who had grown up reading or listening to the The Adventurer series found it oddly familiar.

These great pirates seemed to be fond of such boats.

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Chapter 436 - 436 Open and Inclusive Faith

436 Open and Inclusive Faith

Lumian had seen a similar three-masted sailboat in the illustrations of The Adventurer series. It stood out amidst the bustling Lavigny Docks, a contrast to the inland steamboats, and drew the attention of passersby.

Simultaneously, Lumian felt a warmth in his right palm, which then subsided.

What's happening? Has the lingering aura of the Blood Emperor experienced a change under stimulus? This… this feels like a kind of resonance… Lumian pondered in surprise and confusion.

Could there be a connection between this ancient three-masted sailboat and Blood Emperor Alista Tudor?

As Lumian stared at the sailboat, Jenna disembarked from the carriage and playfully remarked, "You didn't bring me here just to show me this vintage pirate ship, did you?"

She had read the first two serialized volumes of The Adventurer series in the newspapers. Books had always been expensive in her family, and when her father's work-related compensation didn't arrive after his unfortunate death, her reading opportunities grew scarce. She'd occasionally find old newspapers used to paste on the wall or for other purposes and read until sunset.

With the presence of street bards and her mother's bedtime stories, her spirit remained far from desolate.

Since arriving in the market district and becoming an underground singer, Jenna had found a means to earn a substantial income. She had even saved up to purchase a pirated copy of The Adventurer series from an underground bookseller to finally appreciate the intricate illustrations. This endeavor often made her feel remorseful for Madam Fors Wall. She planned to buy an authentic set once she had cleared all her debts.

To her surprise, her debts only seemed to accumulate.

Lumian withdrew his gaze and replied with a teasing grin, "Consider this a bonus."

The two of them stood on the harbor's edge, discussing the disparities between the ancient sailboat and the illustrations from The Adventurer series.

After a while, Lumian led Jenna to the unassuming The Fool's cathedral.

Jenna looked up at the bell tower and steeple atop the four-story building, examining the silver symbol comprising an incomplete Pupil-less Eye and a section of Contorted Lines. Baffled, she inquired, "Is this a cathedral?"

Aren't cathedrals supposed to be grander?

The cathedral of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church in the market district and Quartier du Jardin Botanique was far more magnificent and sacred in comparison.

"Yes," Lumian affirmed, leading the way inside.

Jenna trailed closely behind, increasingly surprised by the cathedral's simplicity.

The stained glass windows were scarce, and there was no ornate gilding to be found. The cathedral lacked intricate machinery. The only semblance of religion lay in the massive murals, which seemed to favor muted colors and subdued illumination.

The most striking feature of the cathedral was the large, numerous windows. Even on the ground floor, the interior was awash with natural light.

Jenna's gaze flitted over the murals, and she instinctively felt that they symbolized guidance and redemption.

It was slightly past 10 a.m., and the cathedral's attendance was sparse. It was silent, exuding a sense of serenity.

Lumian guided Jenna to the third row of pews facing the altar.

He surveyed their surroundings, his gaze resting on The Fool's Sacred Emblem before him. In a solemn tone, he disclosed,

"You should be aware that Franca and I are keeping something from you. There are some secrets we haven't shared with you."

"Yeah," Jenna nodded gently, awaiting Lumian's explanation.

Lumian continued, "As you can tell, Franca and I aren't related. She and my sister Aurore are close friends who share common interests. Loki and I Know Someone, whom we dealt with previously, are also part of this group, but they betrayed others, causing a disaster in Cordu and costing my sister her life."

"I see…" Jenna replied, having refrained from delving too deeply previously but having a vague understanding.

Lumian's gaze remained fixed on Mr. Fool's altar.

"There's another connection between Franca and me. We don't believe in the Eternal Blazing Sun or the God of Steam and Machinery…"

Jenna couldn't help but chuckle.

"I've already guessed it. When have any of you gone to church? I don't usually see you praying at fixed times!

"At least you know which street église Saint-Robert is on. Franca might not even know where the cathedral's door opens to."

She, on the other hand, prayed, listened to the sermons, and attended Mass at least once a week. This was both a display of piety to the Purifiers and a habit of faith from all these years.

The only downside was that she often sang at Salle de Bal Brise until midnight before returning to Rue des Blouses Blanches to sleep. She couldn't get up to welcome the morning sun and dawn, so she could only set a fixed prayer time for noon.

"No, I'm not going because I'm a wanted criminal. I can barely be considered a believer in the Eternal Blazing Sun," Lumian replied with a smile. Then, he said solemnly, "Franca and I believe in this orthodox god, the great Mr. Fool."

Lumian pressed his hand to his chest and whispered solemnly, "Praise The Fool!"

The Fool… Jenna found the deity's name peculiar.

After a moment of thought, she asked, "The Fool from tarot cards?"

"Yes, you've guessed it correctly," Lumian affirmed.

Jenna spotted a tall figure in a black trench coat and a half top hat approaching the altar. She instinctively lowered her head and said with a hint of smugness,

"I've discovered almost ten decks of tarot cards from Franca, and she doesn't usually use them for divination."

That fellow… Could it be that she thought it would be cool to toss a Two of Cups on the corpse after taking out a target, so she made preparations? The more Lumian considered it, the more he felt that this was Franca's style.

Jenna paused for a moment and asked, "Does The Fool Pharmaceutical Company also belong to the Church of The Fool?"

"Uh…" Lumian was momentarily caught off guard.

He hadn’t given it much thought. Initially, he believed the pharmaceutical company was named after tarot cards.

Now, it appeared that The Fool from the tarot cards seemed to equal Mr. Fool!

Lumian hesitated before responding, “Maybe.”

He wasn’t entirely certain if The Fool Pharmaceutical Company was affiliated with the Church of The Fool or if it was simply a venture by a member of the Tarot Club.

Jenna demonstrated her keen insight as she inquired, “You brought me here not only because it’s a safe place for discussing your faith but also to show that the Church of The Fool is a recognized, mainstream church capable of constructing a cathedral in Trier.”

“You’re not as naive as you appear,” Lumian turned his head and smiled. “My third purpose is to ask if you’d consider converting to Mr. Fool?”

“Convert…” Jenna’s mind was in a whirl.

Lumian adopted a persuasive tone, saying, “This doesn’t conflict with your contract with the Purifiers. Mr. Fool is an orthodox god acknowledged by all the Churches. However, the propagation of this faith is concentrated on the maritime islands and certain regions of the Southern Continent. Most people in the Northern Continent are unaware of it.”

“But…” Jenna hesitated. “I’ve never thought about changing my faith…”

Her faith in the Eternal Blazing Sun couldn’t be described as devout or fanatical, but it was a habit she had cultivated since childhood. She had also accepted most of the teachings. Until today, the idea of conversion had never crossed her mind. She didn’t feel a strong urge to change her faith, nor did she harbor any deep dissatisfaction with the Church.

The only times she’d voiced discontent were during the most challenging years her family endured, especially after her mother’s passing. At those moments, she occasionally grumbled about the Eternal Blazing Sun, feeling that He didn’t protect true believers. However, these moments were far from sufficient to motivate a conversion.

Lumian glanced at Jenna’s face and offered a reassuring smile.

“It’s entirely fine if you don’t want to convert. I’m merely suggesting it. My main concern is ensuring that if you ever find yourself separated from us during the impending disaster, you know this place is a refuge. Don’t worry, even if you’re a believer of the Eternal Blazing Sun, Mr. Fool’s Church will welcome you and provide protection.”

Jenna seemed puzzled and asked, “Then why can’t I go to église Saint-Robert?”

Lumian collected his thoughts and explained, “Franca and I share the same faith and work for a secret organization. Two days ago, we received information from the organization.

“There’s a problem with the Eternal Blazing Sun Church’s Sacred Heart Cloister, similar to the issues with the Deep Valley Cloister of the God of Steam and Machinery Church.

“In such a situation, some cathedrals may not be trustworthy, and you might not be able to distinguish between the reliable and the unreliable. So, it’s better to choose those that are known to be reliable.”

Jenna had personally experienced the troubles at the Deep Valley Cloister, so she understood the significance of potential problems in the Sacred Heart Cloister.

She murmured to herself, “Could the catastrophe begin from within the Churches?”

“Perhaps,” Lumian replied, though he couldn’t provide a definitive answer.

At that moment, a towering figure, dressed in a custom-made black trench coat and a half top hat, approached Lumian and Jenna. He stood at a towering 2.56 meters, with golden hair and eyes.

He looked at Jenna and asked with a warm smile, “Sister, is this your first visit to my lord’s cathedral?”

“Yes, but I’m here with a friend,” Jenna replied. She instinctively resisted the idea of converting her faith and inquired, “And who are you?”

“I am the bishop here, Teslian,” the half-giant introduced himself with a confident smile.

Jenna observed his attire, which looked far from conventional clergy attire.

Teslian turned his gaze to Lumian and continued, “Would you be interested in hearing me introduce our beacon and savior, the great Mr. Fool?

“Don’t worry. Our lord doesn’t compel people to convert, and he doesn’t mind if they believe in him alongside other deities. In turn, believing in him can also coexist with other beliefs.”

“You… you can do that?” Jenna stammered.

This was completely beyond her understanding!

Which deity would allow their followers to have impure or multiple beliefs?

Additionally, why refer to this deity as ‘him’ instead of ‘Him’? The latter is the exclusive pronoun for deities! Why address this deity as ‘mister’?

Jenna’s mind was filled with questions, and her thoughts were in disarray.

“Yes, Mr. Fool is known for his compassion and benevolence,” the bishop responded, seeing that Jenna and Lumian didn’t object. He then opened the black Bible with silver patterns and began to preach.

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Chapter 437 - 437 Cashing Out

437 Cashing Out

Jenna remained indifferent during the initial part of the sermon, finding it reminiscent of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church's Holy Bible.

However, her attention perked up when The Fool requested to be addressed as "him" rather than "Him." This slight change in expression indicated her growing focus.

As the sermon continued, Jenna's surprise became evident, and her face revealed a mix of shock and intrigue.

Is Gehrman Sparrow, the adventurer, truly connected to The Fool's Church?

Could he be an angelic messenger delivering The Fool's message of redemption?

Jenna wondered amidst her astonishment. Teslian, the half-giant bishop, didn't press her about her belief in The Fool but instead turned his attention to a supplicant deeply immersed in prayer.

The supplicant appeared to be a sailor in his prime from the sea. His skin was bronze, and his face bore obvious signs of the elements. His hair was disheveled and dark-blue, and Jenna couldn't see his features due to his bowed head in prayer.

Dressed in the same linen shirt, brown jacket, and loose dark pantaloons favored by sailors and pirates, he also sported a unique belt adorned with a dagger, telescope, and various tools.

He's probably a captain. He looks quite dignified… Lumian retracted his gaze and looked at Jenna.

Jenna, still processing the revelations, rose in a daze and left the cathedral. She wandered aimlessly along the harbor district's edge.

Lumian followed, hands in his pockets, refraining from immediate persuasion.

After walking for nearly ten minutes, Jenna slowed down and muttered to herself, "No wonder you claim to be a shallow believer in God."

The God referred to the Eternal Blazing Sun.

Lumian replied with a smirk, "You can also be a shallow believer in Mr. Fool. He doesn't concern himself with such matters."

“I… I’ll think about it,” Jenna replied, her beliefs shaken by the unconventional sermon. It wasn’t that the Bible was well-written; rather, The Fool’s claims and the Church of The Fool’s approach differed significantly from her previous teachings. She now hesitated and struggled with her faith.

Lumian glanced at her and didn’t incessantly persuade her.

In such situations, it was crucial to know when to stop, as excessive attempts could lead to resistance and repulsion.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian sighed inwardly.

As expected, proselytizing needs to be done by professionals…

Given my friendship with Jenna, she didn’t hesitate to reject my suggestion to convert. However, the bishop’s sermon had stirred something within her, causing her to reconsider her stance…

The two of them continued in silence for another 10 to 20 meters, with Lumian stealing glances at the bustling harbor and the deserted streets nearby. He casually asked, “How’s your progress with gathering the Witch potion ingredients?”

Jenna was caught off guard by the question.

“I only digested the Instigator potion two days ago. How could I have gathered the main ingredient for the Witch potion so quickly?”

Perhaps it was the residual influence of the cathedral, but Jenna’s urge to curse wasn’t as pronounced.

Lumian dropped a bombshell. “Well, I digested the Pyromaniac potion yesterday and managed to acquire both the main ingredient and the supplementary ingredients for the Conspirer potion on the same day.”

Jenna couldn’t help but exclaim, “Dammit! How can we be the same? I want a special hunting ground for hunting and digestion too!”

Franca had already informed her of Lumian’s encounter in Red Swan Castle, excluding Magician’s response.

Jenna found it surreal.

Just last night, they were both at Sequence 8 and Sequence 7 respectively, and the gap wasn’t that significant. Why did the things they experienced differ so much, as if they were worlds apart?

One of them still dwelled on the fringes of mysticism, occasionally encountering the horrifying bizarre. The other had delved deep into the mysteries, surrounded by secrecy and danger.

After venting her frustration, Jenna disclosed, “I asked the Purifiers, and they don’t seem very supportive of my advancement to become a Witch. They won’t pay me in advance for the main ingredients. They claimed there’s no pressing need for my investigations at the moment. However, they did promise to sell me the main ingredients and the more elusive supplementary ingredients at a discount if I can raise the funds. The main ingredients alone cost 16,000 verl d’or each.”

A discounted price… Besides, does this promise mean that the Purifiers have every main ingredient for the Witch potion? I thought they only had converged Beyonder characteristics. After all, their method of obtaining Witch-related items should involve hunting… Does the Eternal Blazing Sun Church have a way to restore Beyonder characteristics to main ingredients? Lumian didn’t quite understand.

Turning his gaze to the road, Lumian pondered and asked, “Do you owe Franca 60,000 verl d’or now?”

“Yes, I do.” Jenna fretted at the mention of it. I wonder when I’ll be able to pay it back.”

Lumian chuckled.

“In that case, would you like to owe a bit more?”

“Huh?” Jenna’s thoughts froze.

With his hands still in his pockets, Lumian grinned.

“Owe me 35,000 verl d’or, and I’ll help you gather all the ingredients for the Witch potion.”

Jenna, intrigued, inquired, “D-do you actually know where to find them?”

Lumian chuckled.

“I’m not entirely certain, but there’s a good chance.”

He intended to exchange it from the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

Yesterday, he had received recognition from Gardner Martin for his adventure in Red Swan Castle’s underground maze, and this contribution could be redeemed immediately or accumulated for higher Sequence potions. Lumian hadn’t made up his mind on how to use it yet, but now he decided to utilize it to get all the ingredients for Jenna’s Witch potion.

He might need to fork out some money, but disaster could strike at any moment. He might not remain with the Iron and Blood Cross Order in the future. Converting his contribution into a tangible reward made sense.

Moreover, the items gained through such contributions were of lesser value compared to having a willing, living Witch's assistance.

When the time came, with Conspirer Lumian, Demoness of Pleasure Franca, and Witch Jenna working together, they could form a formidable team even among official factions and the Inquisition. Combined with the appropriate mystical items, they could handle most Beyonders below the demigod level. Additionally, they had an unofficial member—Psychiatrist Anthony Reid.

Lumian believed that Gardner Martin likely had the necessary Witch potion ingredients. After all, the Iron and Blood Cross Order primarily followed the Hunter pathway, which was closely related to the Assassin pathway. Over the years, it was improbable that no convergence effect had occurred.

If needed, Lumian could also seek assistance from Mr. K and Madam Magician.

Jenna fell silent, unable to respond immediately.

Lumian chuckled again.

"It's not a good thing to owe me. In addition to repaying the principal, you have to pay interest, which is helping me with certain tasks. Fortunately, you'll soon have an opportunity to do so."

Jenna pursed her lips and exhaled slowly.

"Alright, I'll give you 10,000 verl d'or first, so I'll only owe you 25,000."

"No problem," Lumian agreed indifferently.

Seeing that Jenna was about to say something, he chuckled and said, "No need to thank me…"

He then lowered his voice and feigned a feminine voice. "We're friends, after all!"

"…" Jenna struggled to find the words. "Dammit!"

Lumian simply chuckled and said nothing.

Jenna, on the other hand, silently followed him across the street toward a few rental carriages parked there.

As they boarded the carriage, Jenna suddenly muttered to herself, "Thank you."

Lumian appeared to be in his own world, occupying a seat in the carriage and disregarding his image.

…

In the afternoon, at 11 Rue des Fontaines.

Lumian spotted Gardner Martin, dressed in a shirt and sweater.

Lumian got straight to the point, saying, “Boss, I wish to exchange my contributions for the Witch potion or all the corresponding ingredients.”

Gardner Martin, without displaying any surprise, looked at Lumian with a smile and inquired, “Who is the Witch potion for?”

Lumian replied candidly, “It’s for Jenna.”

Gardner Martin appeared to be listening and gestured for Lumian to continue.

Lumian said sincerely, “I’m looking for a reliable ally with considerable strength.”

At this point, he smiled. “Moreover, I want to experience genuine pleasure.”

Gardner Martin burst into laughter.

“Not bad. That’s what an ambitious Hunter should aim for.

“No problem. Come by tomorrow morning to collect the Beyonder characteristics and supplementary ingredients. Oh, and make up the difference with another 10,000 verl d’or.”

Gardner Martin understood that Lumian and Jenna had a close relationship with mutual trust. Furthermore, Lumian and Franca’s cooperation didn’t involve seeking pleasure.

Lumian responded with a smile, “Thank you, Commanding Officer.”

After leaving Rue des Fontaines and returning to Salle de Bal Brise, Lumian finally had some free time after a long day of activity.

In the evening, he enjoyed La Fée Verte while listening to Jenna, dressed as Showy Diva, singing passionately to earn money. His mind wandered.

How much can a local singer earn? It’s only a few thousand verl d’or a year…

It’s still better to fleece the Iron and Blood Cross Order and hunt heretics… When Jenna becomes a Witch, she’ll have the strength to participate in battles at this level…

Speaking of which, I didn’t think much of it when I read The Adventurer series in the past. Now that I think about it, doesn’t Gehrman Sparrow spend most of his time hunting pirates with Beyonder characteristics? How can he become a famous pirate or a great pirate without Beyonder characteristics?

Yes, although the corresponding battles are vague and exaggerated, only highlighting the main points, it’s obvious that the author has a certain understanding of Beyonder battles. Is Madam Fors Wall also a Beyonder?

Relaxing until nearly midnight, Lumian returned to Auberge du Coq Doré.

As soon as he pushed open Room 207's door, he saw a square of letter on the table under the crimson moonlight.

Madam Magician's letter… Lumian lit the carbide lamp and unfolded the letter.

"Mr. Hanged Man hopes that you and the Two of Cups can summon the Armored Shadow again soon. He'll be responsible for providing the gold.

"Let me know when you've confirmed the time."

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Chapter 438 - 438 Ghost Ship

438 Ghost Ship

Mr. Hanged Man is ready… Lumian took out his golden pocket watch and opened it to take a look.

He could summon the Armored Shadow at any moment. His only concern was that it might pose a danger. Summoning it without a good reason could lead to an attack or a curse. However, with The Hanged Man—the Major Arcana card holder of the Tarot Club—present, there was no need to worry about such matters.

The uncertainty now lay in Franca's availability. After all, she had to translate.

Lumian burned the letter and left Auberge du Coq Doré, heading straight for Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

"Why are you here so late?" Franca clearly wasn't the early-to-bed type.

Lumian glanced at Jenna, who had just finished removing her heavy makeup, and smiled at Franca.

"Do you have time tonight? We can summon the Armored Shadow again and ask it questions."

Summon the Armored Shadow again… Franca's eyes lit up as she blurted out, "I'm free!"

The Armored Shadow was most likely from her homeland, involving the secret of their transmigration and their way back. Even at 6 a.m., she would say she had time to be a translator, let alone just midnight!

Noticing Jenna's confusion and curiosity, Franca explained excitedly, "Didn't Ciel ask us to gather information on spirit world creatures that fulfill the summoning conditions? One of the summoning targets he chose had a directional ambiguity when designing the summoning incantation, attracting a very peculiar spirit world creature. The ability to snort and spit you saw earlier came from a contract with that spirit world creature."

Out of jealousy and envy, Franca described the Spell of Harrumph as snorting and spitting.

Jenna had a deep impression of the Spell of Harrumph and found its effects potent and mystical. Her initial reaction was to ask, "Is it possible for us to sign a contract with similar spirit world creatures?"

“Sigh, I wish I had a similar contracted creature, but I can’t obtain such a special contract,” Franca expressed her regret and resentment sincerely. “In short, that spirit world creature is very unique and involves many secrets. A big shot of the organization backing us—uh, a demigod—is very interested. And now, only Ciel can accurately summon the target creature through the contract’s connection.”

Franca asked Lumian, “Is that person here?”

“Yes.” Lumian nodded gently.

Jenna looked at them thoughtfully and asked, “Is it Justice, Magician, or have The Star or The Moon arrived?”

Franca’s expression froze, her mouth slightly agape, her eyes filled with disbelief. Lumian was taken aback. He didn’t expect Jenna to reveal the code names of the Major Arcana card holders and make the connection that her two companions were related to them.

Amidst the indescribable silence, Jenna’s brows relaxed, and she smiled.

“I guessed right! You guys belong to the secret organization that uses tarot cards as their code names!”

“H-how did you know?” Franca asked in surprise.

Jenna pursed her lips and sneered.

“You have nearly ten decks of tarot cards in this room, and you don’t usually use them for divination. Then, Ciel told me that the Mr. Fool you believe in is roughly equivalent to The Fool in tarot cards. As for me, I’ve been attending mysticism gatherings recently and heard about the legend of Justice and the other Major Arcana card holders, as well as the existence of Minor Arcana cards.

“With so much information placed before me, if I don’t make any connections and probe, won’t I appear stupid?”

The more she spoke, the more pleased she became.

Franca was taken aback for a moment before saying, “Your Instigator potion wasn’t wasted…”

“Excellent,” Lumian praised reluctantly. “You’re prepared to drink the Witch potion.”

Without further ado, he left Apartment 601 with Franca. He planned to write a letter to Madam Magician at Auberge du Coq Doré, informing her that he could summon the Armored Shadow now.

Jenna watched them leave and muttered to herself, Witch… What would happen if a man drinks the Witch potion…

…

Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 207.

After Lumian sent the letter, he didn't extinguish the candle's flame and waited for a reply under the dual illumination.

Franca paced back and forth in the cramped room, feeling excited and a little nervous.

She yearned for clues about returning home via the Armored Shadow, but she feared that even her last hope would be obliterated.

Time ticked by. Just as the Demoness of Pleasure felt as if a year had passed, the candlelight in the room suddenly surged.

In the dim yellow flames the size of a human head, resplendent starlight flew out, enveloping Lumian and Franca.

It was as if they had arrived in the boundless cosmos, becoming abnormally insignificant.

After a brief moment of dizziness, Lumian and Franca realized that they had left Room 207 of Auberge du Coq Doré and arrived on a pitch-black deck.

The first thing they saw was an ancient triple mast, its grayish-white sails curled up like an open door.

The crimson moonlight fell from the sky, but it couldn't completely illuminate the area where Lumian and Franca were. It was dark, and the wooden planks were mottled, like an ancient haunted building.

Franca quickly surveyed the area and sighed with relief.

"Wow, an ancient sailboat.

"It's perfect for horror films!"

"What's a horror film?" Lumian asked casually.

Franca smiled awkwardly.

"A play depicting a ghost story."

As she spoke, she touched the dark flaxen rope resting on the shipboard, as if trying to discern its exact era.

Suddenly, the rope came alive and nimbly wrapped around Franca's right hand, attempting to bind the Demoness of Pleasure.

A layer of black flames erupted, scorching the dark linen rope that seemed to possess a life of its own.

The rope snapped back, as if in pain.

Simultaneously, a rope that had been lying silently on the deck swung towards Lumian.

Lumian raised his slightly scorching right palm and grabbed the front of the rope.

The rope suddenly turned still, as if all its vitality had been drained.

All the ropes that had come back to life in this area returned to normal. They landed with a thud and stopped wriggling.

Lumian looked down at his right palm and muttered silently, The Blood Emperor's remnant aura on me faintly resonates with this ship…

These strange ropes became obedient when they felt the heat in my right palm…

Is this the ancient sailboat I saw at Lavigny Docks this morning?

Lavigny Docks… The Fool cathedral… Is this Mr. Hanged Man's ship?

Lumian's thoughts raced as he quickly made a guess.

Franca spun around and said excitedly, "This is a ghost ship, a ghost ship!

"It's alive to begin with!"

As the Demoness of Pleasure's voice reverberated across the deck, Lumian heard Madam Magician's words: "Mr. Hanged Man's ghost ship is a relic from the Tudor Empire. There are many unsolved secrets. When he rewards you, you can choose to explore this ship. As for when to embark on the exploration, it's up to you."

As expected, it has something to do with the Tudor Empire… Lumian's resolve grew as he walked towards the cabin.

As Franca followed, she looked around curiously, touching and tapping here and there. Occasionally, she whispered, as if she wanted to communicate with Mr. Hanged Man's ghost ship.

Amidst the creaking sounds, a door in the cabin opened on its own.

A thick, dark-brown carpet covered the area, flanked by bookshelves and a liquor cabinet. Yellow-covered books and dark-red bottles of wine filled the space.

In front of the bookshelf stood a wide wooden table. On it were a variety of items —an ink bottle, a quill, a brass sextant, a black metallic telescope, and white

candles.

Leaning against the desk stood a middle-aged man of average stature. His dark-blue hair was disheveled, and his skin was bronze and rough. He wore a linen shirt, a brown jacket, and loose dark pantaloons. He exuded a dignified aura. He was the supplicant Lumian had seen at The Fool cathedral that morning.

“Are you Mr. Hanged Man?” Lumian inquired.

The man in his prime nodded slightly.

“I’m The Hanged Man.”

Franca scrutinized the man and recalled that they were on a ghost ship. She immediately recalled something.

“Y-you’re Stormbringer Alger? Is this the Blue Avenger?” Franca blurted out in surprise and delight.

The Hanged Man glanced at her and replied expressionlessly, “You’ve heard of me?”

“Of course!” Franca praised sincerely. “You’re a maritime king without the title of a Pirate King. If you hadn’t fought the King of the Five Seas in the Fog Sea and caused the surrounding ships to experience a terrifying storm, no one would have known you were a demigod.

“Furthermore, you’re different from those pirates. You’re a genuine, unadulterated treasure hunter with lofty aspirations. You never plunder proper ships. You’ve been exploring the western borders of the Fog Sea, searching for the Lost City of Newins and the Solomon Empire’s inheritance.”

It wasn’t easy for her to hold back the words “you’re my idol.” She felt that it would appear to transcend the times. Franca had once dreamed of being a pure treasure hunter and sailing the Five Seas.

Stormbringer Alger… After Lumian discovered that Church of The Fool’s power center was at sea, he had consciously shared information about the Pirate Kings and Pirate Admirals with Franca. He knew that Alger, nicknamed Stormbringer, was a demigod captain, but he wasn’t a Pirate King. Therefore, his nickname didn’t include the term “king.” However, Vice Admiral Ailment, who had become a Pirate King, was now known as the Queen of Ailment.

As for the Lost City of Newins and the Solomon Empire’s legacy, they were treasure legends that had been popular in the Five Seas for many years.

At times, Lumian couldn’t help but admire Fors Wall, the author of The Adventurer series. She had the audacity to write erotic stories about the Pirate Kings.

Aren’t you afraid of being found and executed?

Or was she under the protection of the Church of The Fool?

In the face of Franca's enthusiastic praise, The Hanged Man Alger fell silent for two seconds before saying,

"Maintaining a certain level of purity is both a good and a bad thing.

"Can we begin the summoning ritual?"

Franca muttered under her breath, "A man still has a youthful side even in death…"

Lumian responded to Mr. Hanged Man's question, "Anytime."

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Chapter 439 - 439 Three Questions

439 Three Questions

With The Hanged Man present, Lumian didn't need to worry about an attack from the Armored Shadow. Instead, he followed a straightforward procedure: creating a protective wall of spirituality and summoning the Armored Shadow as if beckoning a messenger.

Before the candle's dark-green flame, an indistinct shadow silently hovered in midair, adorned in pitch-black armor adorned with golden fish scales.

The contorted faces on the scales twisted ferociously, wordlessly expressing their agony, which had transformed into a deep-seated hatred and malice toward all living beings around them.

The Hanged Man Alger, dressed as a sailor, took a step forward, and subtle silver lightning bolts crackled from the wall of spirituality.

In an instant, they materialized out of thin air, causing Lumian and Franca's skin to prickle.

Amidst the oppressive calm preceding the impending storm, the myriad transparent faces on the Armored Shadow returned to their silence, but their malevolent gazes persisted.

Lumian fixed his gaze on the six radiant gold bars on the altar, steadying himself. In Hermes, he spoke, "I offer a sacrifice. Please answer three questions."

The blurry faces on the Armored Shadow's form shifted their attention to the glowing gold, silently conveying their agreement to Lumian.

Lumian then nodded at The Hanged Man.

After a brief pause, The Hanged Man posed his first question, "Who are you?"

Lumian repeated the query in Hermes. As his contracted creature, the Armored Shadow would only engage in communication under these circumstances.

After a moment of silence, the Armored Shadow spoke in a language that only Franca could barely decipher.

"I am Chen Tu, the God of Ghost Suppression, imperially conferred by the Celestial Master."

Celestial Master… Franca paused, considering her words carefully.

“His last name is Chen and his first name is Tu; he holds the title of the God of Ghost Suppression, which was granted by the leader of Daoism. He is responsible for suppressing evil spirits.”

“What is Daoism?” The Hanged Man inquired after some thought.

“What does ‘imperially conferred’ mean?” Lumian turned to Franca and asked in Intisian.

To him, referring to as an ‘-ism’, regardless of the prefix, seemed no different from the Church of The Fool or the Eternal Blazing Sun Church.

Franca appeared troubled.

“It’s a complex topic. We can discuss it later. I’m afraid the Armored Shadow may not have the patience to wait.”

That’s true… Lumian cast his gaze at Mr. Hanged Man.

The Hanged Man paused briefly before asking the second question, which Lumian translated into Hermes. “What makes the eastern sea so special?”

In a deep and solemn tone, the Armored Shadow replied, “In the East Sea, there’s a long-lost immortal mountain known as Penglai.”

Penglai… It’s really my homeland… Franca was delighted by this revelation. Her translation speed increased as she continued, “On the eastern sea, there’s a mountain peak inhabited by various powerful warlocks and unique deities. It has been lost to history, and its name is Penglai.”

Both Lumian and The Hanged Man found these words to be straightforward and didn’t raise any further questions.

After a brief pause, The Hanged Man Alger asked in a deliberate manner, “Have there been any unusual occurrences in the eastern sea in recent years?”

In recent years? How could the Armored Shadow be aware of recent events when he was suspected to have been killed by the Underworld Daoist, imprisoned by his side, and transported to the Yellow Springs millennia ago? It’s a time when the Blood Emperor had just perished or recently perished. Franca quietly mused on this but refrained from correcting The Hanged Man.

Lumian repeated the question, and the Armored Shadow responded with a cold tone, “A corpse from Penglai floated over via the river…”

Franca was taken aback and quickly translated, “The mountain called Penglai has reappeared. A powerful warlock or special deity residing on it has perished, and their corpse drifted to a place that might be the River Styx! It’s—it’s the river

where Blood Emperor Alista Tudor was suppressed by Underworld Daoist. It's the source of the Samaritan Women's Spring!"

Does this mean that the eastern sea of the world where the Armored Shadow resides has undergone an abnormality in recent years? The long-vanished divine mountain, Penglai, has reappeared, and powerful Beyonders residing there have perished? Has the mountain known as Penglai always stood tall in the East Sea, or does it only appear occasionally? Lumian yearned to inquire further, but he couldn't ask any more questions due to the rules pertaining to summoning.

The six gold bars on the altar disintegrated, turning into sparkling specks of light that merged with the pitch-black fish-scale armor.

This time, nearly one-fifth of the armor plates turned golden and radiant.

The Hanged Man observed as the Armored Shadow faded into the dark-green candle flame. He remained silent, lost in thought, his intentions unclear.

Lumian completed the ritual and swiftly tidied up the altar. Turning to Franca, he said, "You can explain the terms in the first answer."

You're killing me! Franca grumbled silently and pondered for a moment before saying, "An imperial conferment is equivalent to a boon. Yes, a boon!

"This Armored Shadow named Chen Tu was granted a position within the Church or a deity's kingdom. Through this role, he gained the corresponding powers to suppress evil spirits.

"It's not a direct gift from a deity but rather a ceremonial act performed by the leader of that school of thought, acting on behalf of the deity and bestowing a specific title."

Lumian listened attentively and started to grasp the concept of imperial conferment.

This more structured boon system not only linked the power of boons to a specific role but also emphasized the role of the deity's proxy.

Franca exhaled and said, "That's the basic idea. There are many more intricacies if you delve deeper into it. It's a complex topic that can't be fully explained in a short time. Terms like the Heavenly Court, the Netherworld, Ritual Protocols, Receiving Scriptures, and others are related, but I'm not well-versed in all of them. My knowledge is limited to individual terms."

Seeing Mr. Hanged Man and Lumian still staring at her, her heart skipped a beat.

"You really want me to explain all of it?"

The Hanged Man nodded slightly.

“I understand it might be challenging to explain on the spot, and there may be inaccuracies. You can take your time to recollect and organize the information when you return. It might be helpful to put it in writing and convey it to me through your Major Arcana card holder.”

“Alright.” Franca was relieved that The Hanged Man was understanding and accommodating. He seemed skilled at considering things from another person’s perspective. She then grumbled silently,

Why did I agree so quickly…

The Hanged Man exuded a sense of dignity without arrogance as he smiled and said, “Once you’ve prepared the written information, you can think about what kind of compensation you’d like.”

Franca had several desires, including a mystical item similar to the Spell of Harrumph, a Sealed Artifact that could enable teleportation, and the Sequence 5 Demoness of Affliction potion formula.

She found herself in a dilemma, as she had considered the reward in advance and had almost forgotten to explain the term “Daoism” until Lumian reminded her.

After careful consideration, Franca provided a succinct explanation, “Daoism is a school of thought that venerates the natural laws and the corresponding philosophy that shapes them into unique deities for worship. Their leader is called the Celestial Master, which essentially means a teacher who comprehends the world’s operating laws and spreads that knowledge. The ‘ways of heaven’ refers to the operating laws and corresponding philosophy of the world I mentioned earlier.”

Lumian attempted to distill the main point, asking, “So, Celestial Masters are akin to leaders like pontiffs, popes, chief shepherds, and matriarchs, with different titles depending on the denomination?”

Franca hesitated for a moment before confirming, “You could put it that way.”

As long as one didn’t contemplate joining Daoism, this simplified explanation was sufficient to understand the basic concept.

Lumian nodded.

“It seems like a Celestial Master and an Underworld Daoist are on a similar level.”

“I agree,” Franca agreed.

During their conversation, The Hanged Man, Alger, rarely interrupted. He mostly listened quietly, occasionally expressing his thoughts or asking questions, which allowed the conversation to flow smoothly. Lumian and Franca shared a lot of information in one go.

Finally, the Major Arcana card holder looked at Lumian and asked, “The Armored Shadow’s three answers have been very helpful. What would you like as a reward?”

Very helpful? Apart from allowing us to gain a better understanding of that world and know that the missing Penglai divine mountain has reappeared, there’s nothing of practical use… Lumian kept to Madam Magician’s advice and said without hesitation, “I would like the opportunity to explore this ghost ship.”

Franca was surprised by Lumian’s request. Her initial shock was quickly replaced by excitement.

I want it too. I want the opportunity to pilot the ghost ship and study it!

The Hanged Man glanced at Lumian and remarked, “As I expected, you’ve already sensed the uniqueness of the Blue Avenger. It’s one of the Tudor Empire’s relics. Would you like to explore it now?”

Before Lumian could respond, the deep voice of Termiboros echoed in his mind, “Dangerous.”

Danger… For real? Is Termiboros merely concerned about being implicated by me, so He warned me? Or is He afraid that I might gain something special during my exploration of the Blue Avenger, potentially disrupting Trier’s potential catastrophe and foiling His scheme? Lumian was momentarily unsure if he should believe Termiboros’s words.

Termiboros continued in a deep voice, “If you wish to resurrect Alista Tudor within your body, you can explore it now.”

Lumian didn’t pay much attention to Termiboros’s words. He recalled Madam Magician’s prior hint: I can decide when to begin the exploration…

Does this mean I should consider delaying it? Otherwise, why mention it at all? Just request the reward to be a chance of an exploration… Perhaps Aurore’s philosophy of balance is at play here. My current negative effects are temporarily balanced, so there’s no rush to strengthen the Blood Emperor’s aura… As a Conspirer, Lumian quickly made a decision.

“Mr. Hanged Man, I’d like to explore the Blue Avenger at an opportune moment.”

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Chapter 440 - 440 Illusory Sigh

440 Illusory Sigh

The Hanged Man agreed to Lumian's request and instructed him to contact him through Magician.

They noticed that Alger wasn't alone on the ghost ship, the Blue Avenger. A dozen sailors were scattered around, hiding in the shadows and making no attempts to approach.

Suddenly, Lumian and Franca witnessed a brilliant star hanging in front of them. It gleamed with an eerie, blue light, as though it had emerged from another realm.

The star expanded rapidly, as if it had descended to the ground in an instant. Its radiant glow enveloped everything in its vicinity.

Lumian and Franca blinked, momentarily blinded by the starlight. When their vision cleared, they found themselves back in Room 207 of Auberge du Coq Doré.

"A-absolutely stunning!" Franca exclaimed, her face brimming with longing.

She lamented the fact that her only option for switching paths was to become a Hunter, unable to experience the carefree life of an Apprentice. She could only hope to acquire a Sealed Artifact with similar abilities in the future.

Lumian, lost in thought, didn't echo Franca's praise.

Observing his contemplative demeanor, Franca couldn't help but voice her concerns, "Don't you find this situation a bit odd?

"Gathering 100,000 verl d'or in gold should be a breeze for a treasure hunter as formidable as a Pirate King. Coming up with those three questions shouldn't take long, yet Mr. Hanged Man only sought you out to summon the Armored Shadow after all these days, and it happened after he arrived in Trier.

"Besides, Madam Magician could easily transport us to the sea and the Blue Avenger before sending us back. So, why wait for Mr. Hanged Man to arrive in Trier to do so?"

Lumian smiled, praising Franca's astute observation.

"You're quite perceptive this time. It seems that putting your brain to work has its benefits. Idleness can give the impression of a lack of intelligence."

“Dammit, are you praising me or insulting me?” Franca retorted, her brow furrowed. “Either Mr. Hanged Man was in some unique situation that prevented an individual from pinpointing his location, or he has other motives for being in Trier…”

At this point, Lumian and Franca both remembered the impending catastrophe and felt the ominous pressure of an approaching storm hanging over the city.

“Could the Tarot Club be dispatching more Major Arcana card holders to Trier? Perhaps to protect as many citizens as possible if we fail to avert the disaster?” Franca speculated.

Lumian nodded thoughtfully, refraining from argument.

After a moment of silence, Franca changed the topic with enthusiasm, exclaiming, “I want to become a demigod. I want to amass gold!”

Observing Lumian’s inquisitive expression, Franca continued, driven by her desires, “That way, I can have you summon the Armored Shadow and ask the questions I’ve been itching to ask. No need to rely on the protection of Major Arcana card holders!”

“Then give it your all, Miss Pleasure,” Lumian teased.

The next day, just before noon, Lumian returned from Rue des Fontaines. He led Jenna underground to the third level of the catacombs, arriving at a small square with two sacrificial pillars.

If she didn’t know Lumian well enough to understand his character, she might have suspected that her friend suddenly had sinister intentions.

Lumian, wearing a black satchel slung diagonally across him, stood confidently with his hands in his pockets. He smiled and explained, “I’m giving you the safest environment for your advancement.”

Having heard Franca’s account and Madam Magician’s words, Lumian had reason to believe that Sequence 0 of the Assassin pathway, the true goddess worshiped by the Demoness Sect, was likely a woman who had transformed from a man, and Her nature was deeply twisted.

It was said that this Primordial Demoness was driven by pain and a desire to replicate Her experiences through the generations. Consequently, She despised ordinary women who became Witches. Even the Demoness Sect hunted down female Assassins, female Instigators, and true Witches.

Given this context, Jenna’s consumption of the Witch potion might be affected. After all, even the Hidden Sage, an existing occupying Sequence 0, could subtly influence every Beyonder of the Mystery Pryer pathway while they consumed the potion for their advancement. He whispered to them and imparted knowledge to them. There was no reason the true evil goddess, Primordial Demoness, couldn’t

exert significant influence on the Witches.

At lower Sequences, the influence shouldn't be too strong—even Aurore had advanced to Sequence 7 and become a Warlock under the Hidden Sage's constant whispers. However, it was better to be cautious. Since there was a way to reduce or weaken these influences, it made sense to do so.

Witches represented the first qualitative transformation of the Assassin pathway, perhaps even the core essence of Demoness. The Primordial Demoness, who sought to change men into women, would likely pay more attention to this particular Sequence advancement. Neither Franca nor Lumian wanted Jenna to take unnecessary risks.

Of course, Madam Magician had occasionally mentioned that this evil goddess wasn't in a stable state.

"The safest?" Jenna looked around, still somewhat unconvinced.

The surroundings were immersed in darkness, and corpses were scattered about. How did it seem safe?

Only the two weathered stone pillars appeared strangely warm and calming.

Lumian briefly explained the unique nature of the sacrificial square and concluded, "At the pinnacle of the Assassin pathway is an evil goddess. No one knows if She might suddenly lose Her sanity. Deities of the same pathway have the ability to influence Beyonders when They consume potions for advancement. This, well, divine manifestation, complicates things."

"This place can significantly weaken that connection."

Jenna listened intently and approached the stone pillar engraved with the Sun Sacred Emblem. She extended her arms slightly and began to pray.

Noticing that she hadn't asked Franca why she hadn't been affected by this before, Lumian raised his right hand, stroked his chin, and clicked his tongue.

"Praise the Sun!" Jenna sang praises to the Eternal Blazing Sun reverently as she concluded her prayer.

Lumian remained silent as he handed Jenna the Witch Beyonder characteristic, Shadow Lizard scales, and other ingredients from the black satchel.

He had used her 10,000 verl d'or to obtain these items from Gardner Martin.

Jenna examined the dark-blue vertical eye-like "jewel" and the intricate thread-like patterns on its surface. She knelt on one knee and began concocting the potion on the unusually clean square ground.

Before long, she held a dark-red potion with concealed shadows in her hand.

Jenna steadied herself, feeling as though she had been pushed forward by various events in the past few months. She couldn't stop now.

Perhaps this is my destiny… Praise the Sun! Jenna closed her eyes and added silently in her heart, Praise The Fool!

At this critical moment, in her quest for smooth advancement and survival, her faith inadvertently shifted.

Without hesitation, Jenna swallowed the potion, fully accepting the notion that she had been dead when she assassinated Hugues Artois.

The potion was icy and illusory, like melting frost. Jenna quickly began to feel an itching, painful sensation spreading all over her body.

Her thoughts began to blur, and she felt as though she were slowly sinking into water.

Suddenly, excruciating pain surged throughout her body, jolting Jenna back to full awareness. She found herself surrounded by black, silent flames that were slowly consuming her.

Above her, a translucent layer of frost-encased ice, like a mirror, prevented Jenna from escaping the black flames.

In the next instant, a face and a figure materialized on the ice.

The face bore an uncanny resemblance to Jenna's own!

The figure was another Jenna, but her master hand had transformed into her left!

The Jenna above the ice stared at the figure engulfed by the black flames with anticipation and desire.

Experienced in combat, Jenna reacted quickly despite her surprise and horror. She summoned all her strength and delivered a powerful punch upward.

The ice shattered without a sound, and the "corrupted" Jenna plunged into the black flames.

In the distance, a python-like black object swayed gently, with a dark-blue vertical eye at its tip.

The bizarre "python" vanished in an instant, not entering the area. Instead, it delved into a black shadow.

Almost simultaneously, Jenna heard a long, painful sigh.

The ethereal sigh seemed to emanate from very close to her, as if it originated from the vicinity of the sacrificial square and the surrounding corpses.

The black shadow cast by the strange serpent expanded wildly, growing larger and fainter.

It enveloped Jenna and the malevolent figure and seeped into their bodies.

Jenna refused to surrender. Enduring the pain and dizziness, she crawled out of the abyss of black flames and onto the nearby ice. The black shadow weakened and ceased its pursuit. It could only drag the malevolent Jenna into an unfathomable abyss.

The scene shattered instantly, and Jenna's vision returned to normal. She saw the mottled stone pillar engraved with the Sun Sacred Emblem.

Her face contorted, but the pain in her body gradually subsided.

Lumian watched as the black flames on Jenna's body rapidly shrank and dissipated, while the surrounding frost melted. He understood that his companion had successfully advanced to Sequence 7 and had become a Witch.

Only then did he turn his gaze towards the edge of the sacrificial square, where the tomb and the surrounding corpses lay in darkness.

Not long after Jenna consumed the potion, he sensed an anomaly in that direction. However, nothing entered the clean square with the two sacrificial pillars.

When Jenna's unusual state finally subsided, she rose to her feet and noticed Lumian gazing into the distance. Puzzled, she asked, "After drinking the potion, I thought I heard a sigh from over there."

Lumian nodded slowly and replied, "On this level of the catacombs, there's a Krismona Night Pillar. It represents a Demoness of Catastrophe who once met her end here."

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Chapter 441 - 441 Demoness Cooperation

441 Demoness Cooperation

“Demoness of Catastrophe…” Jenna had never heard of this term from Franca. “Is it a Sequence name?”

Lumian didn’t hold anything back.

“Yes, a Sequence 2 angel. Heh heh, the term angel and Demoness always seem strange together.”

Angel… Jenna didn’t have a clear impression of individuals at this level.

Though she had often heard Lumian and Franca talk about the terror and might of demigods, it had remained theoretical for her. She didn’t know how terrifying or powerful they were.

Jenna muttered to herself, “Krismona… Hasn’t She already perished? Why am I still hearing Her sigh? It should be from Her, right?”

Lumian looked at Jenna and said solemnly, “For such a formidable figure, even if They were to perish completely, there would still be remnants of Their mind that wouldn’t dissipate. It’s like not stiffening even after becoming a corpse.

“In the future, if you come into contact with the inheritance of a similar influential figure, you must be very, very careful.”

Jenna looked surprised and vigilant. She glanced at the edge of the sacrificial square and asked with concern, “What do we do now?”

Lumian chuckled.

“What can we do? What else but wait for Her to sigh? Do you have thoughts of comforting Her?

“Don’t worry. She’s imprisoned by death and bound by the spring water. She can’t leave the fourth and third levels of the catacombs. As long as you don’t explore this place, you don’t have to worry about anything.

“How was it? Was there any influence from the Primordial Demoness?”

It was only then that Lumian, holding the white candle, assessed Jenna's appearance.

Her skin, which hadn't been particularly good due to her background and experiences, seemed to have been reborn. Her facial features looked the same as usual, but the details had become more exquisite, as if there was a luster flowing through them. Overall, she exuded an alluring charm and became even more feminine.

Even with Lumian's experience, he couldn't help but marvel inwardly.

Jenna was also scrutinizing herself. She felt that her height had increased a little, and the ratio of her body parts she had previously been dissatisfied with had approached perfection.

"I sensed a peculiar python appear, but it didn't really approach me. It quickly vanished…" Jenna recalled as she took out a prepared mirror. Facing the yellow candle flame in Lumian's hand, she scrutinized her reflection and couldn't help but smile.

It was common for most people to appreciate beauty, and Jenna was no exception. Seeing how beautiful and charming she had become made her quite happy. She even felt enchanted by herself.

Reluctantly, she put away the mirror and assessed her changes from various angles.

I can now use black flames that incinerate the Spirit Body and spirituality. I've gained the blessing of frost. I've mastered various forms of black magic. With prepared ingredients, I can directly become invisible and cast rare spells. Additionally, I can curse targets through blood and other media. I've unlocked the door to Mirror magic and now possess anti-divination and the ability to create substitutes. I am skilled in using staff and can also use them as substitutes…

Compared to Assassins and Instigators, Witches had undergone a qualitative transformation. They possessed comprehensive abilities, considerable strength, and excelled in survival. Only then did Jenna truly feel like a member of the world of mysticism and a controller of superpowers.

She suddenly felt an urge to test a Witch's various abilities on a target.

However, after glancing at Lumian, she abandoned the idea.

She felt that there was still a significant gap between them. Even a Sequence 6 Franca likely wasn't Ciel's match. Of course, if Franca truly intended to assassinate Lumian, her chances of eliminating him weren't slim. Most Beyonders below Sequence 4 were relatively weak. If they committed an error, it could very well plunge them into the depths of hell.

Lumian tossed a burning white candle to Jenna and pointed at his black satchel.

“There’s some cosmetics in here. Make yourself look less attractive to hide your striking charm. That way, the Demoness Sect’s hidden members won’t recognize you as a Witch at a glance.”

For this purpose, he had brought a set of women’s cosmetics.

Jenna clicked her tongue.

“You even thought of such details in advance…”

“In the Beyonder world, being cautious and meticulous effectively increases your chances of survival,” Lumian said, turning around. “Let’s disguise ourselves elsewhere. It’s not suitable to stay here for too long.”

“Why do I get the feeling that you’re often impulsive and a little crazy…” Jenna muttered softly before smiling. “Do you also think I’ve become more beautiful now?”

She wasn’t wearing any makeup, but her blue eyes seemed to contain starlight as they darted around.

Lumian scoffed.

“I respect the potion’s effects and believe in the influence of Beyonder characteristics.”

With that, he turned around, holding the candle, and walked towards the wide stone steps leading up.

You sure never lose out in a battle of tongues! Jenna cursed under her breath, quickly packed her things, and followed him.

Before she could figure out how to continue teasing Lumian and express her gratitude, she heard the man slowly walk forward and casually say, “Also, you have to work for me tomorrow.”

“Dammit!” Jenna blurted out.

…

In the library district, Rue des Terraces.

The street was known for its diverse terraces, frequented by tourists.

Lumian stood on a café terrace decorated in shades of green and white, casting a sidelong glance at Building 20, where Guillaume Bénet’s widow, Condiment Beauty Paulina, resided.

The terrace of the house was painted a refreshing white, supported by a wooden frame that shielded it from the wind and rain. It resembled a resort hotel on the

southern coast of Intis.

Lumian sipped his coffee as all the information and conjectures he had gathered during this period flashed through his mind.

Every week, a mysterious man visits the Condiment Beauty at night. Once or twice a week… At least once this week. It should be within these two days…

According to the observations of the surrounding citizens, there are a total of three mysterious men who visited Paulina at night. One is young, one is in his prime, and one is nearly 60 years old…

Who among them could be the Sinners' liaison, Bouvard Pont-Péro?

One of Bouvard's contracted abilities is Transfiguration. These three might or might not be him. They're just substitutes he creates to attract attention, and he sneaks in disguised as one of Paulina's servants…

The price of Transfiguration is one's own face. The downside is the desire to abuse others… The buildings on Rue de la Terrasse are quite soundproof. None of the neighbors heard Paulina's screams…

Some time has elapsed since Guillaume Bénet's demise. It's highly likely that Paulina officially joined the Sinners organization, received a boon, and became a Beyonder…

The most important part of the plan is to determine who Bouvard Pont-Péro is…

Lumian had a plan. As the sky darkened, he finished his coffee and donned his brown round hat. Without making a sound, he left the building and vanished into an alley on the side of the street.

…

20 Rue de la Terrasse, in the spacious and warm master bedroom.

The mature and beautiful Paulina, adorned in a pale-white nightgown, walked to the full-body mirror, removed her clothes, and examined the whip-like marks on her body.

They had faded to a faint dark-red hue, likely to dissipate completely within a few days.

Paulina let out a soft sigh at the thought of the pain she would have to endure for the next two days.

Her gaze fell upon the black mark on her right shoulder, and she rejoiced that the first contract ability she had chosen after becoming a Contractee was Regeneration.

Once activated, it could regenerate flesh and skin to a certain extent, allowing various injuries to quickly recover.

Paulina had never tested whether this could regenerate limbs, believing it should work if the conditions were met.

Of course, the dead couldn't activate their abilities.

Paulina adjusted her light-white nightgown and prepared to put on light makeup to welcome a potential guest.

At that moment, she suddenly felt a strong sense of danger.

This also stemmed from her contract ability. She felt that sensing danger was more important than actual combat.

For this, she had paid the price of "fertility" and received the negative effect of mild mental weakness.

Paulina's nerves tightened, and her body abruptly bent backward. With the flexibility of a Dancer, she distanced herself from the source of danger.

Simultaneously, she opened her right palm, and silver-white lightning shot out, intertwining with a crackling sound, enveloping the area where she suspected the assailant was hiding.

This was her third and final contracted ability, Electric Arc. It could effectively compensate for her weaknesses in offensive means. The price was that she was prone to lightning strikes in a thunderstorm. The downside was that her body had become more sensitive. She could originally withstand 70-80% of her original threshold for pain. This made Paulina resistant to Bouvard Pont-Péro's visit. She relied on Alms Monk's endurance to hold on every time.

With a cracking sound, a mirror suddenly appeared in the area covered by the lightning in her palm. It quickly charred and shattered into pieces.

From the corner of her eye, Paulina spotted a figure swiftly outlined by the drawn curtains. She hurriedly contorted her body to avoid it.

Suddenly, a white fist materialized behind her head and smashed below her ear.

With a bang, Paulina blacked out.

Behind Condiment Beauty, Jenna, dressed as a female mercenary, instantly appeared.

She and Franca easily controlled their target with dual invisibility, anti-divination tactics, one to attract attention, and the other to launch a sneak attack.

Franca took a few steps forward, retrieved the Bliss Society's sedative, and brought it to Paulina's nose.

After completing her task, Jenna drew the curtains to leave a slight crack, casting her outstretched palm in the light of the room.

This was a signal to Lumian that the operation had succeeded.

Before long, Lumian scaled the outer wall and entered the master bedroom with Jenna's help.

Then, he tossed the Lie earring to Franca.

Franca transformed the mystical item into a silver pendant and hung it on her chest.

Her appearance and height changed, becoming more and more like Paulina.

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Chapter 442 - 442 Opportunity to Act

442 Opportunity to Act

Seeing Franca appear before her as Paulina, Jenna couldn't help but marvel at the wonders of the Lie accessory.

Franca gazed at her reflection in the full-body mirror and stroked her face gently. She chuckled and said, "I like this style too."

"What don't you like?" Lumian mocked.

"This is called having an eye for beauty!" Franca opened Paulina's wardrobe and chose a pair of pajamas that could hide many items. She entered the master bedroom's washroom and began changing.

Soon, "Madame Paulina" emerged. Jenna knew Franca well, but she temporarily couldn't tell the authenticity.

After Franca entered Invisibility, Lumian administered some truth serum to the unconscious Paulina.

He estimated the time and felt that it was about time. Then, he took out the Mysticism Smelling Salts and brought them to Paulina's nose.

Amidst the sneezes, Lumian capped the bottle and retreated into a crevice beside the wardrobe, preventing Paulina, who had regained consciousness, from seeing him.

Jenna retrieved a small revolver from her dark brown belt, squatted down, and pressed it against Paulina's forehead, ready to pull the trigger.

Paulina snapped out of her daze and saw a face adorned with a silvery-white half-mask.

The face was uncovered, and although the skin wasn't fair and had some flaws, and the texture was concealed by cosmetics, the curves were quite beautiful, making people of the same sex take a second look.

Immediately after, Paulina felt the coldness of the gun's barrel and saw a revolver held to her head.

Her body tensed instinctively.

Jenna didn't give her a chance to express her doubts or pleas. She asked bluntly,

“When will Bouvard Pont-Péro arrive?”

Paulina replied subconsciously, “In the next two days…”

Before she could finish, she suddenly shut her mouth, disbelief etched on her face.

W-why did I say what was on my mind?

Jenna raised a second question based on her preparations.

“In the past two months, among the mysterious men who visited you under the cover of night, who was Bouvard Pont-Péro? Or were all of them him?”

Jenna asked curiously, “Will the others Bouvard Pont-Péro send sleep with you?”

“No,” Paulina replied, swallowing her saliva. “Bouvard possesses a strong sense of possessiveness. Since I’ve already become his lover, he won’t allow me to have any more intercourse with other men. The people he sends will only chat with me, have dinner with me, and wander around the bedroom for a while before leaving.”

Very possessive… Lumian’s thoughts raced as he listened in the shadows, recalling the mysticism knowledge he had obtained when he became a Contractee.

Soon, he found a contracted creature that fit the criteria and its corresponding abilities.

Evil Shadow Black Beast, a spirit world creature that resides in the shadows of creatures. The birth of its descendants requires the stripping of a shadow as a carrier. Creatures that lose their shadows will die on the spot…

By sacrificing a human’s shadow, he could obtain the Shadow Substitution ability from the Evil Shadow Black Beast, and his possessiveness would significantly increase…

By controlling the target or subduing them in advance, he could complete Shadow Substitution in battle and use someone else’s shadow to take damage on his behalf, avoiding dangerous attacks. Under such circumstances, the distance between the main body and the target couldn’t exceed 20 meters…

“I wonder how much those actors earn…” Jenna teased with a smile before asking, “What Sequence Beyonder is Bouvard Pont-Péro equivalent to. What contractual abilities does he possess?”

Paulina pursed her lips, unwilling to answer.

After a few seconds, she couldn’t resist the urge to spill the beans. She opened her mouth and said, “Bouvard is an Ascetic. He said that a Fate Appropriator is the most important Sequence of the Inevitability pathway before obtaining godhood. One needs to make significant contributions to obtain the corresponding boon. He’s still far from that.

“He once mentioned that Ascetic can have six contractual abilities, but I don’t know if that refers to ordinary circumstances or special circumstances.”

Leaning against the wardrobe, Lumian couldn’t help but chuckle inwardly.

Temiboros, are you aware of this?

He didn’t ask because he knew Termiboros wouldn’t answer such a question.

Paulina continued, “He didn’t display all his abilities in front of me. He always wore pajamas and didn’t expose his upper body during sex.

“I’ve seen him emerge from the shadows and know he has three imps. He even suggested I choose the Danger Premonition ability, believing it to be useful.”

Shadow Burial, Tamed Imps, Danger Premonition, Shadow Substitution, Transfiguration… That’s a total of five contracted abilities… If Bouvard Pont-Péro is nothing special, there should be only one unknown contracted ability. Even if he’s stronger than ordinary Ascetics, there’s a high chance that his total abilities won’t exceed eight… Lumian quickly formed a clearer understanding.

The price of Shadow Burial was having normal dreams. The downside was becoming more extreme and paranoid. The price of Tamed Imps was three infant corpses that had died before they were born. The downside was that he had to use his life force to feed the imps, and there was a risk of backlash. The specific method was to grow sarcomas that looked like breastfeeding. Danger Premonition involved sacrificing fertility and become mentally weak…

Contractee abilities are truly peculiar… Ever since becoming a Witch and becoming deeply involved in the Sinners organization, Jenna had learned about Contractee, Alms Monk, Ascetic, and other Inevitability Sequences. She now knew why Lumian possessed Spell of Harrumph, Spirit World Traversal, and other abilities.

She thought for a moment and asked, “Apart from contractual abilities, does Bouvard Pont-Péro possess any mystical items, Beyonder weapons, or other items?”

Paulina shuddered inexplicably.

“H-he has two pockets that I can’t touch. He always chooses the kind of pajamas with pockets or pants pockets.”

Carries some items… I wonder what powers they possess… But at least we won’t end up empty-handed… Lumian allowed his thoughts to wander.

Jenna followed the predetermined rhythm of their conversation and inquired about Paulina’s performances in front of Bouvard Pont-Péro, her interactions with the butler and servants in the building, her abilities, and her assets.

Then, Paulina fainted again.

“She possesses Regeneration, much like a Vampire’s self-healing ability. The sedative’s effects will likely be diminished and won’t endure for long,” Jenna inquired. “Why didn’t you simply eliminate her?”

Lumian cast a glance at the new Witch and let out a chuckle.

“You’re quite the ruthless one, aren’t you?”

Jenna pursed her lips and stated, “Showing kindness to heretics only harms innocent citizens.”

“Exactly!” Franca, disguised as Paulina, deactivated her Invisibility and concurred.

The more she observed Witch Jenna, the more she found herself liking her. Despite Jenna deliberately donning unattractive makeup and a half-mask, Franca had a discerning eye for beauty.

Lumian scoffed and said, “Haven’t you heard that Bouvard Pont-Péro seems to possess Danger Premonition? Even though you can counter divination, if Paulina were to die now and her boon’s power returns to its source, do you think Bouvard won’t receive a warning from fate?

“Anthony still has time to enter. He won’t engage in direct combat, but he’ll serve a purpose in my scheme.”

Lumian not only aimed to capture Bouvard Pont-Péro but also intended to act as a Conspirer in this endeavor.

“I understand,” Franca said with widened eyes. “I just adhere to the notion of being ruthless toward heretics.”

As she spoke, she removed the Lie silver pendant from her chest and tossed it to Jenna. Lumian instructed Anthony Reid to infiltrate the building via the outer wall of the master bedroom.

…

As the drizzle descended into night, the gas street lamps on both sides of the street emitted a hazy glow.

At 20 Rue de la Terrasse, a man in a silk top hat, black suit, and dark bow tie rang the doorbell.

He had an ordinary appearance, short, thick eyebrows, and deep blue eyes. He wouldn’t attract anyone’s attention when he walked along the bustling arcade.

The butler of the house opened the door. He glanced at the visitor and discreetly gestured.

The man formed a circle with his hands and asked, “Where’s Paulina?”

“Madame awaits you in the bedroom,” the butler replied respectfully.

The man nodded and made his way through the living room and up the stairs, arriving outside the master bedroom.

Without knocking, he turned the handle and entered.

In the spacious and warm master bedroom, the wall lamps had all been extinguished. The candlelight flickered dimly, casting a soft, rosy glow that quickened one’s pulse.

The man’s eyes fixed on Paulina, reclining on the bed, and a grin crept across his face.

“Why does it feel even more enticing than before?”

“Something special just for you,” Paulina whispered.

The man stared at the alluring contours, his pulse racing. He chuckled and said,

“Why do I find you more captivating than ever?”

“I dressed up just for you.” Paulina, in her two-piece pajamas, seemed bashful, her cheeks flushed as she closed her eyes.

The man swallowed hard, his mind on high alert, though his body couldn’t resist taking a step forward.

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Chapter 443 - 443 Trap Within A Trap

443 Trap Within A Trap

The man suspected to be Bouvard Pont-Péro took a step forward and finally regained some rationality.

He adjusted the dark bow tie beneath his neck, and three indistinct figures materialized above his head and shoulders.

These figures weren't large; they looked like newborns with pale-white, bluish skin and sinister expressions on their round, distorted faces.

Tamed Imps!

The three translucent and indistinct imps burrowed toward Bouvard Pont-Péro's chest, each finding its place and began suckling in a frenzied manner.

Suddenly, their figures became much clearer. They left his body, circling around and flying at an extremely fast speed to different parts of 20 Rue de la Terrasse.

With no corporeal form, they effortlessly traversed walls and doors. In a short span of time, they went through the master bedroom's wardrobe, desk, changing room, and washroom, leaving no room for any assailant to hide.

One sinister-looking imp with a bluish-white face even circled the room's shadows, ensuring that no Beyonder could rely on supernatural powers to lurk in this special environment.

Seeing Paulina's puzzled and watery gaze as she opened her eyes, Bouvard Pont-Péro subconsciously explained, "My Danger Premonition tells me that something is amiss here. Lately, I need to be extremely cautious and avoid making any mistakes. After I eliminate the hidden danger and confirm my safety, I'll enjoy my evening with you."

For some inexplicable reason, Bouvard's tone was gentler and more eager to explain than before when facing Paulina. It was as if her attire and demeanor tonight had touched his heart, making him irresistibly attracted and eager to please her.

As Bouvard Pont-Péro finished speaking, one of the imps left the master bedroom and entered the adjacent room.

With its bluish-white skin, it reached the end of the corridor, passed through the wardrobe, and entered.

In the next moment, it saw a figure bound and gagged.

The figure wore a pale-white nightgown, and her clothes were disheveled, revealing a large area of her skin. She was beautiful, elegant, and had a plump body like a ripe fruit. She was another Paulina!

The contorted-faced imp let out a shrill cry and rushed back into Bouvard Pont-Péro's embrace. As it drew closer to his chest, sucking, it relayed the scene it had witnessed to its feeder.

Bouvard Pont-Péro's expression changed, realizing he had fallen into a trap and been ambushed.

Luckily, he had been cautious enough to detect hidden dangers in advance!

The Sinners' liaison darkened and merged with his shadow, sliding into the wall's shadows like a snake.

His Shadow Burial's ability was unlike that of many Beyonders. They relied on the dimness of shadows to hide, while he transformed himself into a shadow, truly becoming part of the darkness. Just like the special creatures that inhabited such environments, he could stray into alternate spaces connected to certain shadowy regions.

At that moment, Bouvard Pont-Péro felt as if he had plunged into a lightless sea. His body extended and merged with the inky droplets.

Quickly, he darted towards the room at the end of the corridor.

His mission: to save Paulina and escape Rue de la Terrasse with her.

He harbored an extraordinary possessiveness for this Condiment Beauty.

As Bouvard moved through the shadows, he suddenly heard a crisp crack.

The yellow gas wall lamp blazed to life, filling every inch of the glass cover with flames.

The gas lamps in the corridor transformed into miniature suns, banishing the shadows.

Only a serpentine humanoid shadow remained on the floor.

Jenna, who had transformed into the lady's maid using Lie, emerged from a side room, casting a black flame onto Bouvard Pont-Péro's shadow.

The Sinners' liaison immediately felt pain and weakness originating from the depths of his soul.

Without hesitation, he used Shadow Substitution.

In 20 Rue de la Terrasse, Paulina's butler and servants had already become believers in Inevitability. They submitted to the envoy, Bouvard Pont-Péro, and their shadows were offered for exchange!

In Paulina's lady's maid's room, the human shadow suddenly squirmed and transformed.

The black shadow stood up, becoming plumper, resembling Bouvard Pont-Péro.

The shadows in the corridor quickly dissipated under the black flames. The lady's maid in the room twitched a few times, and black flames oozed from her nostrils, ears, mouth, and eyes. Then, she fell silent and ceased breathing.

Bouvard Pont-Péro seized the moment when Shadow Substitution took effect to activate another contracted ability.

He sprinted forward, leaving behind dozens, even hundreds of phantoms.

His body flickered amidst the phantoms, shifting positions so that Jenna couldn't lock onto him or distinguish him.

In the blink of an eye, Bouvard Pont-Péro, accompanied by a group of figures, entered the room where Paulina was bound and opened the corresponding wardrobe.

Paulina's eyes were filled with surprise, desire, and hope as she watched Bouvard's right hand, gleaming with a metallic luster, become incredibly sharp.

In an instant, the Sinners' liaison severed the rope and attempted to escape the encirclement with Paulina.

He had a total of eight contracted abilities, one of which had never been used before.

At that moment, as the rope loosened, Paulina couldn't help but remember her traumatic experiences of abuse at the hands of Bouvard, the pain etched into the depths of her mind.

Uncontrollable hatred surged in her heart. She longed for the one who had harmed her to face justice.

She suddenly raised her right hand.

Alarm bells rang in Bouvard's mind as he sensed an intense Danger Premonition.

Yet, at this distance, no one could react faster than Electric Arc.

Silver-white lightning shot from Paulina's palm and struck Bouvard's body. His body went numb, and even his thoughts seemed to be engulfed by lightning, temporarily rendering him powerless.

Franca, disguised as Paulina, had already closed within five meters, aiming the Ring of Punishment she wore.

Lightning flickered in her eyes, and Bouvard's body shuddered, as if his soul was being torn apart, in excruciating pain that left him unable to think straight.

Psychic Piercing!

Smack!

Jenna, who had dashed to her target's side, clenched her fist and struck behind Bouvard's ear before he could rely on his Ascetic endurance to recover.

The Sinners' liaison slipped into unconsciousness.

Before Bouvard lost consciousness, he glimpsed a pair of black leather shoes and heard a taunting voice.

"I don't even need to lift a finger when dealing with you."

…

Bouvard abruptly broke free from the darkness and regained consciousness.

The first thing he saw was a right leg resting on his left knee and that pair of black leather shoes. Then, he saw a young man leaning back in an armchair, his hands pressing on the armrests.

Bouvard instinctively wanted to use his abilities, but all his thoughts seemed to sink into a quagmire, unresponsive.

In the next moment, he noticed that his feet had transformed into cow hooves, and he was wrapped in a layer of brown cowhide.

Animal Creation Spell… Bouvard instantly grasped his predicament. He watched as the young man with golden and black hair leisurely flipped through the grayish-blue cloth bag he had hidden in his pocket.

Wh— Bouvard instinctively held his breath, hoping that the other party would take out the item.

Soon, the young man retrieved a gold coin with a 5 verl d'or denomination with a Sunbird relief from a grayish-blue cloth bag.

Yes! That's it! Bouvard anticipated what would happen next.

Simultaneously, he focused on observing the other party's luck.

This was one of the few abilities not restricted by the Animal Creation Spell.

Bouvard's bullish face now donning an honest look, suddenly froze.

He saw his enemy's luck of all kinds, and he saw layers of colors constantly changing!

A sharp pain pierced Bouvard's brain, and he instinctively closed his eyes. He felt a sticky, warm, and bloody liquid slowly trickle down from his eyeballs.

As Bouvard's pain subsided, as if he had seen something he shouldn't have, he heard the young man say with a smile, "Were you hoping that I'll take away this gold coin of misfortune and have my luck changed passively, allowing you to escape your predicament?"

He knows the Luck Transference Spell… He also knows the Animal Creation Spell… Does he belong to another organization that believes in Inevitability or… A name suddenly flashed through Bouvard Pont-Péro's mind: Lumian Lee?

Lumian seemed to sense Bouvard's thoughts and smiled without humor.

"I thought you were always on guard against me."

Bouvard's heart sank, and he abandoned any hope of luck. He immediately used his spirituality to stir the air within the cowhide and indistinctly recited the honorific name of the individual.

However, he quickly realized that his spirituality was on the verge of drying up, and his mind was extremely weak. He couldn't even do such a thing.

"If you understand your situation, you can answer my questions," Lumian said with a smile.

Bouvard subconsciously opened his mouth and mooed.

He had an urge to communicate with the other party, but he could only let out a cow's moo.

Jenna, dressed as a female mercenary, brought over a brass mechanical typewriter and placed it in front of Bouvard.

This was Franca's suggestion: There was no need to worry that Bouvard Pont-Péro wouldn't be able to answer questions after being transformed into a bull by the Animal Creation Spell. As long as he wasn't illiterate and had a certain level of intelligence, he could compose answers by typing on the keyboard. The only drawback was that his speed wouldn't be too fast.

Seeing the calf sit down on its hind legs and place its front hooves on the mechanical typewriter's button with difficulty, Franca, who was invisible and could stop the other party from doing any irrational act at any moment, muttered silently, Now, no one can tell if the person typing at the keyboard is human or bull…

Lumian glanced at Bouvard and asked bluntly, “Where are the Sansons?”

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Chapter 444 - 444 The Sinners' Leader

444 The Sinners' Leader

The brown male calf's front hooves delicately tapped the mismatch-sized mechanical typewriter, careful not to press any keys accidentally.

Lumian toyed with the gold coin of misfortune, patiently awaiting Bouvard's full response.

Seizing the opportunity, he swiftly reviewed the operation in his mind.

From the start, he had no intention of acting personally. First, he wanted to try playing the role of a Conspirer. Second, he aimed to improve the performance and teamwork of the small team members.

Considering Bouvard Pont-Péro's possessiveness, Lumian shifted his attention to Paulina. Through Anthony Reid's repeated Psychological Cues, the woman's accumulated resentment from the abuse had fermented, turning into a seed that would sprout once her restraints were removed.

To make Bouvard lower his guard, allowing his Danger Premonition to only trigger at the end, Lumian not only made Franca prepare against divination but also had his companion masquerade as Paulina, making the target believe subconsciously that the one tied up was the real Paulina.

Of course, she was the real deal. Before Bouvard cut the rope, Paulina didn't hold any true grudge against him. Her sincere desire was to be rescued, an emotion that couldn't be feigned. It was enough to convince Bouvard without setting off his Danger Premonition.

Jenna's role was to launch an attack and provide suppression, preventing the target from observing the environment or contemplating details. This forced him to approach Paulina and escape from 20 Rue de la Terrasse with his precious belongings as quickly as possible. Additionally, they wanted the enemy to instinctively believe that the ambush centered around the master bedroom. The room where the actual Paulina was held was, therefore, relatively secure.

As Lumian had foreseen, Bouvard "sprinted" right into the trap.

Without focusing the conspiracy on Paulina, with Bouvard's Danger Premonition, regardless of how convincing Franca's performance was or how similar she looked to Paulina, he would have sensed it in advance and sent his imps to confirm it cautiously.

From this act, traps are the simplest and most direct conspiracy, while conspiracies are the deepening and escalation of traps… Lumian sensed the potion's minute digestion and sighed inwardly.

Simultaneously, in her invisible state, Franca sensed no impending or brewing danger as Bouvard's hooves struck the keys. She gradually relaxed.

She couldn't help but recall her conversation with the Sinners organization's liaison while impersonating Paulina. Her face flushed red, and she felt intense embarrassment.

How embarrassing! How f*cking embarrassing!

Finally, Bouvard completed his initial keyboard conversation.

Jenna ripped the paper filled with words from the mechanical typewriter and swiftly read it to Lumian and Franca.

"More than two months ago, the Sansons went somewhere and haven't returned yet.

"I don't know where that is. From what they said, it's related to something important.

"Before this, Constace, the mistress of the Sansons, had already gone mad. To prevent her from taking drastic actions when out of control and attracting the attention of official Beyonders and affecting the other members of the organization, her husband, Voisin Sanson, along with their child, killed her and allowed her to return to the Lord's kingdom."

Purged due to madness? When did you get the impression that you weren't mad? However, the extent of your madness isn't serious. You're at a stage where your perspectives are distorted and abnormal. You even know how to disguise yourself… Lumian muttered silently after hearing that.

From his perspective, ever since establishing a connection with the entity known as Inevitability, those believers were no longer ordinary people. They had more or less been corrupted and had potential mental problems. At some point in time, they might completely lose their minds or collapse.

If Lumian didn't possess Mr. Fool's seal and had the Beyonder characteristics balancing things out, he would have been crazier and more terrifying than Constace, whom Bouvard had mentioned.

Jenna, who stood between him and Bouvard, couldn't help but hiss. She felt that it was a good thing to be ruthless to heretics.

Those people had lost their normal emotions. They killed their wife or mother without hesitation!

If they could even do this to their loved ones, one could imagine how they would treat the people around them!

“Who were the ones who went to the unknown place you mentioned?” Lumian inquired.

Tap! Tap! Tap! The calf began typing on the keyboard again.

This time, it was much more proficient than before. Its answers appeared character by character on the paper.

“Voisin Sanson is our leader. He received a revelation and led a few Fate Appropriators in Trier to that place.”

“Voisin Sanson is the leader of the Sinners organization?” Lumian asked in surprise.

According to I Know Someone, didn’t Voisin Sanson choose to join the Sinners organization because he was on the verge of bankruptcy and later successfully changed his luck and obtained the power of boons?

Tap! Tap! Tap! A new answer was printed on the paper and read out by Jenna.

“He was the first to spread the faith of Inevitability in Trier. He obtained godhood nearly three years ago and became a Circle Inhabitant.

“He likes to disguise himself. In front of his collaborators, he pretends to only be a key member of the organization and not the founder.

“His wife and children were all brought into the mysticism world by him to become the bestowed of Inevitability. Apart from the deceased Roche, his wife and three other children are now Fate Appropriators. Of course, Constace has already been purged.”

A demigod—a Circle Inhabitant—actually interacted with Low- to Mid-Sequence Beyonders like Loki and I Know Someone. He’s truly sinister and cunning… I wonder if I Know Someone and the others noticed. If they didn’t, they’re truly living in their own world. They think the people around them are fools who can be exploited and squeezed dry of their value… Who’s the hunter and who’s the prey? Lumian mocked the two key members of April Fool’s once again.

Simultaneously, he gained a deeper understanding of the Sinners organization.

The cult had been established with the Sansons as its core.

As for how Voisin Sanson had come into contact with the faith of Inevitability and obtained the boon of an evil god, that was another matter.

From the looks of it, his business had failed, and he was on the brink of bankruptcy. With no other choice, he had tried various things.

“Why didn’t Voisin Sanson let Guillaume Bénet know he was the leader of the Sinners?” Lumian attempted to confirm the details.

Guillaume Bénet was already a Sequence 5 Fate Appropriator, on par with the Sansons and other key members. He was significantly stronger than Bouvard Pont-Péro.

Once again, the calf satiated his desire to share information with his typewriter.

“His Excellency Voisin believed Guillaume Bénet was overly ambitious. If he’s involved in core matters, it will make him arrogant and do unnecessary things.”

To put it simply, Guillaume Bénet’s early conduct of the sacrificial ritual in Cordu had left Voisin dissatisfied. He believed that he had messed up the descent of the Inevitability angel. However, due to the entity known as Inevitability not punishing the Fate Appropriator on the spot, he could only suppress his dissatisfaction and temporarily accept Guillaume Bénet before marginalizing him? Lumian roughly grasped Voisin Sanson’s take on the matter from Bouvard’s response.

He pondered for a moment and changed the question.

“Has Voisin Sanson occasionally contacted you after visiting that place? What are you responsible for? Why do you think you need to be cautious and not make any mistakes?”

The calf’s proficiency with the mechanical typewriter increased once more.

“Before His Excellency Voisin departed, he informed me that he wouldn’t contact me for three months and would only return after the matter was concluded.

“Me and a few other members are responsible for managing different businesses and contacting different believers. We want them to focus on their prayers and businesses for the next three months and not cause any trouble. Likewise for the few of us.”

Does Inevitability’s oracle believe that the catastrophe will descend within three months? It’s been more than two months since Voisin Sanson and company vanished… In less than three weeks, the problem will definitely erupt? Time is of the essence… Lumian inquired about the Sansons and the Sinners organization’s current situation, but it was evident that Bouvard Pont-Péro didn’t know much. He only knew about the matters under him.

Finally, Lumian pointed at the items he had retrieved from the other party’s pocket and asked, “What are these? What’s their purpose?”

The calf replied truthfully through the mechanical typewriter: “You were holding a gold coin of misfortune made using the Luck Transference Spell.

“I once encountered an extremely unlucky person and used the Luck Transference Spell to give him a new life. As a result, he became a believer of my lord. This gold coin of misfortune was the product of that help.”

Once… Lumian frowned and said, “How long can the Luck Transference Spell of an Ascetic last?”

At the Alms Monk stage, he had relied on a ritual to transfer a target’s fate to a corresponding item. The effect could only last three days. Beyond this time limit, if he didn’t find another person to shoulder the fate, it would return to the original owner and couldn’t be transferred again.

After becoming a Contractee, Lumian hadn’t used the Luck Transference Spell again. He could only estimate that the duration would increase to somewhere in the vicinity of five to seven days based on the mystical knowledge he had obtained.

As he spoke, he focused on the 5 verl d’or gold coin in his hand and realized that it was entwined with blood-red—nearly black—luck. It tried to spread towards him but failed to do anything.

Ordinary misfortune can affect me, but extreme misfortune will affect the intertwined fates of Termiboros and me. Without the corresponding level, it can’t shake the main stream… Lumian made a preliminary judgment.

The calf replied amidst the tapping: “Thirteen days is the limit of the Luck Transference Spell. If I want to raise it further, I can only rely on the abilities of a Fate Appropriator.

“In 13 days, if I don’t have an enemy I need to deal with, I’ll randomly choose a target and subject him to misfortune. Then, when his misfortune starts, I’ll promote the power of Inevitability and help him change his luck. I’ll obtain another gold coin of misfortune and a new believer.”

Dammit, a perpetual motion machine! Franca, in her invisibility state, couldn’t help but criticize.

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Chapter 445 - 445 Spoils of War

445 Spoils of War

Lumian was flabbergasted.

You can do that?

After careful consideration, he realized that it was indeed possible. The mystical knowledge that came with the boon only stated that if bad luck hadn't been transferred and returned to the original individual, it couldn't be affected by the Luck Transference Spell. It didn't mention anything about whether people whose fates had been altered by cursed gold coins and other items could be transferred again.

I can't underestimate others. Although they are mostly foolish and not very clever, they occasionally come up with strange ideas and unusual methods. Aurore had once said that no matter how foolish a person is, they will always succeed once after thinking a thousand times… As a Conspirer, Lumian couldn't ignore such a possibility. Otherwise, he might stumble over a proverbial obstacle sooner or later and fall hard. This experience provided Lumian with valuable insight.

Since he didn't show any signs of losing control or the potion's power dissipating after advancing to Conspirer, and he had already digested a bit of the potion, Lumian could pray for the Ascetic boon in a few days and gain the ability to establish a new balance.

Lumian gazed at the calf "sitting" there with difficulty and pondered.

"Can one keep repeating this process?"

Bouvard's hooves tapped on the brass mechanical keyboard, while Jenna read the contents of the paper.

"With each transfer of luck, the river of fate will undergo a certain change and advance to a higher level. This will result in misfortune occurring sooner. The difficulty of stirring it will also keep increasing.

"Two or three more people's fates on the gold coin of misfortune aren't something Ascetics can stir. The same goes for the unlucky banknote.

"An Alms Monk can only maintain one item of fate at a time, while an Ascetic can manage two."

The unlucky banknote referred to a single 20 verl d'or banknote that had originally been stored in the grayish-blue cloth bag. On the front was a bust of Intis's first president, Levanx, and a large dock on the Srenzo River.

So it wasn't that you didn't want more gold coins of misfortune, but you couldn't make them… Lumian nodded slowly.

"How much longer can the gold coins of misfortune and unlucky banknotes last?"

"Ten days." The calf quickly typed out two words.

Franca had heard Lumian mention the Luck Transference Spell, instructing her and Jenna to carefully distinguish spoils of war when facing those on the Inevitability pathway and not to touch anything they shouldn't.

Listening to their conversation, she muttered silently, What unlucky banknotes? I think they're life-threatening banknotes!

Before I transmigrated, I knew a little about such sorcery, but I thought it was fake and rooted in feudal superstition. But now, it seems that humans' thoughts and beliefs are similar in similar environments. Even the sorcery they create is relatively similar. Or could there be traces of an Inevitability evil god or a deity in a similar domain in our world?

Lumian pointed at the two metal canisters beside the gold coin of misfortune and the unlucky banknote and inquired, "What are they?"

"They're all Prophetic Concoctions," Jenna recited the sentence typed by the calf.

Prophetic Concoctions? I've always found them troublesome, so I didn't make them. Besides, if I were to find a corpse and administer the Prophetic Concoction, I might be secretly influenced by Termiboros, resulting in inaccuracies or misleading outcomes. Lumian shifted his attention to the item he found in Bouvard Pont-Péro's other pocket.

It was a monocle—something Lumian didn't dare to recognize—with a peculiar design.

Its main body was a thick, circular cover made of pale-white flesh and dark blood vessels, as if it could be worn directly over one's ear.

One end of the circle extended, connecting to a lens intertwined with a transparent purple tube, still flowing with blood.

Just now, when Franca put on her gloves and took out the item, a strange and illusory voice echoed in her ears, but she couldn't hear it clearly.

"What's this?" Lumian asked.

Bouvard tapped on the mechanical typewriter's keyboard.

“A dangerous mystical item. I call it the Eye of Truth.

“It seems to have been severely corrupted. All that’s left is the ability to see through illusions and perceive the truth, the light of spirituality. If you wear it, you can hear the voice of some hidden entity at any moment and experience an irresistible negative influence.

“If you only carry it and don’t touch it with your body, you’ll only experience faint tinnitus and auditory hallucinations.”

An incomplete Eyes of Mystery Prying… Lumian fell silent for a few seconds before asking, “Don’t you have any ritual sheepskin or dog skin?”

“There are three ritualistic dog skins back home,” the calf eagerly shared. He took the initiative to provide details even without Lumian asking. “The incantation for usage is ‘Circle,’ and the dispelling incantation is ‘Arrangement of Fate.’ Any language that can stir supernatural powers is fine.”

Quite devout… Lumian exhaled and smiled.

“What other valuable items do you have at home?”

“There are banknotes worth over 13,000; gold coins, gold bars, and accessories currently valued at 30,000 verl d’or; 20,000 verl d’or worth of stocks and bonds, and real estate deeds for three houses.” The calf listed his assets.

Stocks? I need to secure those stocks and sell them on the black market. Who knows if they will crash tomorrow! Franca keenly caught the keywords relevant to her.

Real estate that can’t be easily discovered by official Beyonders and is difficult to liquidate with more than 60,000 verl d’or… As expected of the liaison responsible for a portion of the Sinners organization’s believers and corresponding businesses… Lumian immediately inquired about the whereabouts of Bouvard’s residence.

Finally, Lumian inquired about the other liaisons and important members of the Sinners organization, but Bouvard had limited knowledge. They mainly had one-way contact with the Sansons and handled their own specific tasks. Interaction with other members was minimal, with occasional meetings at the Sansons’ residence once or twice.

Lumian listened quietly but didn’t immediately decide Bouvard’s fate. Instead, he turned to Franca, Jenna, and Anthony Reid, who was waiting outside the door, avoiding Bouvard’s sight.

“With Paulina’s assets, we’ll gain 75,000 verl d’or, the Eye of Truth, three ritual dog skins, two bottles of Prophetic Concoction, a gold coin of misfortune, and an unlucky banknote,” Lumian explained.

“None of you can take the last two items. Only I can carry them. In addition to them, I want the Eye of Truth and a ritualistic dog skin. You decide what spoils of war you want.”

Jenna cast her gaze at Franca, feeling that her companion’s “sacrifice” was somewhat excessive. She had the right to choose first.

Franca dispelled her invisibility and considered her options. She finally said, “I want the two bottles of Prophetic Concoction and a ritual dog skin. Well, forget it, I can’t get used to it yet. I’ll switch to 15,000 verl d’or, all in gold!”

Jenna then turned her gaze to the door, signaling to Anthony Reid to make his choice.

Anthony’s voice quickly reached their ears.

“I want two ritualistic dog skins. They’ll be very useful to me. Ciel, I’ll need your help when the time comes.

“Oh, and another 20,000 verl d’or.”

Jenna realized that she had a total of 40,000 verl d’or left for her own selection.

She looked at Lumian with a touch of uncertainty.

“I’m essentially working for you as interest payment.”

Lumian replied with a smile, “There are spoils of war even for work. Take them all. Have you noticed that making money has become easier since advancing to Sequence 7?”

Jenna pondered for a moment before saying, “Alright, I’ll return 25,000 to you and 15,000 to Franca.”

With this decision, Jenna’s debt was significantly reduced, and she no longer owed Lumian anymore. The speed at which she was amassing wealth had surpassed her expectations.

As Lumian and the others discussed the distribution of the spoils of war, Bouvard couldn’t help but find the situation intriguing. Most of the items they were talking about had once belonged to him.

He observed them engrossed in their discussion, and even the Demoness, who had been invisibly monitoring him, seemed to relax her vigilance. His heart stirred.

He sensed that Lumian wasn’t an Ascetic, as he had questioned about those abilities. This indicated that the ritualistic cowhide covering him likely originated from Guillaume Bénet. The fact that he hadn’t been awakened by the power of Inevitability while unconscious suggested that it wasn’t a live ritual.

Bouvard was well aware of Guillaume Bénet's Animal Creation Spell item's usage and dispelling incantations.

After a prolonged interrogation, Bouvard's spirituality had somewhat recovered. He began to secretly gather his focus, preparing to recite the incantation of "His Grace."

However, just as the first word echoed within the brown cowhide, Bouvard's eyes narrowed when he realized that Lumian was looking at him with a faint smile.

"Hmph!"

Two beams of white light shot out and rendered Bouvard unconscious once more.

Lumian looked at the collapsed calf and chuckled.

"The test is completed. There are no other secrets. He only possesses the padre's dispelling incantation."

Rather than dealing with Bouvard first, Lumian had discussed the distribution of the spoils of war, hoping to uncover any additional secrets held by the Sinners organization's liaison, who had somewhat recovered spiritually.

Franca glanced at the unconscious calf and subtly hinted, "Should we take him away?"

Her suggestion implied taking Bouvard to the pillared square in the catacombs for sacrificial purposes, potentially preventing some of the boon's power from returning and forming Beyonder items.

Lumian considered for a moment before responding, "We might be discovered. Let's deal with him here."

Lumian couldn't teleport Bouvard to a specific area in the catacombs from the outside world. Various entrances were guarded by tomb administrators, and any suspicious activity might trigger their intervention or a police report.

"Alright," Franca responded after a brief pause. She added with anticipation, "I happen to want to try the Prophetic Concoction."

This experiment required a recently deceased corpse, one that had not been purified or cremated and had been dead for less than seven days.

Lumian stood up and gestured toward the door.

"Call me when Bouvard is dead."

He carried the Flog boxing gloves with him as he left the scene. Staying in the vicinity might disrupt the return of the boon's power.

Franca acknowledged his instructions and then turned to Jenna with a mischievous smile.

“Take care of this. This is your chance to act as a Witch.”

“Can this be used to act as a Witch?” Jenna had previously found the Sequence name of Witch to be abstract and comprehensive, and she hadn’t yet thought of a specific way to act as one.

Franca smiled and explained, “In mysticism, Witches are often associated with negative forces that bring catastrophe. They are seen as possessing mystical, evil, and powerful traits.

“Imagine this: a woman using black flames to kill someone and then pumping their corpse with a strange concoction to make prophecies about the future. It’s sinister and mysterious, just like a Witch.”

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Chapter 446 - 446 Prophecy

446 Prophecy

Witches are associated with negative forces that bring catastrophe… Catastrophe… Jenna, in her role as an Instigator, had come to understand that instigation inevitably led to catastrophe. However, given that the outcome depended on the subjective intentions of the Instigator and the uncertainty of the recipient, Jenna was quite sensitive to the term “catastrophe” and believed it could be a key element in portraying a Witch.

At the same time, she confirmed a suspicion.

Negative force… Witches do indeed represent a negative force…

Sequence 2 of the Assassin pathway is called Demoness of Catastrophe… This means that even at the demigod level, catastrophe is crucial…

Jenna nodded slightly and approached the door of the activity room. She turned the knob on the wall, causing the gas wall lamps to emit a dimmer light.

After doing the same for all four gas wall lamps, the room grew darker. The faint light blended with the shadows, creating an atmosphere of impending terror.

Franca surveyed the room, her curiosity piqued as she asked, “Are you trying to create a dark, terrifying, and eerie atmosphere?”

Jenna smiled and said, “Don’t Witches always appear in such settings in various plays and novels?”

“As expected of a true apprentice actress,” Franca praised Jenna, a sense of pride swelling within her. She, too, had quickly grasped the essence of portraying a Witch. she had even experimented with concocting dark potions for a period, though it paled in comparison to the work of Apothecaries.

In the gloomy and dimly lit room, Jenna returned to the calf.

She leaned forward slightly and, in a deep voice, whispered two words from the Hermes language, “His Grace.”

Nothing happened.

Outside the door, Lumian chuckled, recognizing Jenna’s commitment to her role. She knew she lacked the bestowed powers of Inevitability and couldn’t use the simplified Animal Creation Spell. To portray a Witch convincingly, she had to

follow a predetermined process.

Lumian raised his voice, mimicking the grandeur of Termiboros, resembling a hidden entity responding to a Witch reciting an ominous incantation.

“His Grace.”

In the activity room, an eerie darkness enveloped the area, causing the brown cowhide to split open, revealing Bouvard Pont-Péro. He was dressed only in a white shirt, black pants, and dark socks.

With this accomplished, Lumian proceeded until he reached the entrance of 20 Rue de la Terrasse. Through the glass of the oriel window, he stared at the drizzle, which seemed to meld with the night.

Jenna crouched down and placed her right hand on Bouvard’s forehead.

From her palm, black flames emerged, seeping into the Sinners organization’s liaison.

These flames didn’t crackle but engulfed Bouvard like inky water.

After over ten seconds, Bouvard’s body convulsed violently.

Moments later, his body relaxed, and the smell of incontinence wafted through the air.

He had lost his life.

Dressed as a female mercenary, Jenna examined her attire with dissatisfaction. She stood and extended her hand to Franca.

Franca understood this as her acting as a mysterious and powerful Witch, so she handed her a bottle of Prophetic Concoction.

Jenna genuflected once more and poured the potion into Bouvard’s mouth.

The dark liquid, bubbling with silver-black light, flowed into the corpse’s mouth and lingered there.

A faint gust of wind blew, and the dim gas wall lamp’s light took on a faint blue hue.

Sensing this familiar change, Lumian knew that Bouvard was now entirely lifeless, and the power of the boon had returned to its source. Thus, he turned away from the door, passed Anthony Reid, and re-entered the activity room.

Gulp!

The sound of the corpse swallowing the liquid reached his ears.

With a swish, Bouvard sat up. His face was deathly pale, and his eyes had turned translucent and devoid of color.

As Jenna gazed into those clear eyes, she marveled at their magical quality—the vibrant colors, the pure light, the invisible form, and the mercurial ripples. She endured the intense chill and then turned her attention to Lumian and Franca.

She had no questions; she was merely acting.

Franca motioned for Lumian to take the lead in asking the questions, as she aimed to learn how to make better use of the remaining canister of Prophetic Concoction.

Lumian, well-versed in the rules, carefully considered the inquiry and addressed Jenna, saying, "Ask, where is Voisin Sanson, the former owner of the Voisin Café in the Trier region of the Intis Republic, this time next week?"

This question carried not only its apparent meaning but also a hidden implication.

If Bouvard's corpse couldn't provide a valid answer, or if the response seemed abnormal, it could indicate that Voisin Sanson had left the place where the powerful bestowed resided, possibly signaling an impending catastrophe.

Jenna nodded and posed the question to Bouvard's lifeless form, her voice deep and enchanting.

The corpse's pale face, tinged with a hint of dark green in the dim blue light, opened its mouth and replied in Intisian, "Room 7."

Room 7… So specific? But there's no restrictive description from before… Lumian originally imagined that Bouvard's corpse would be like the deceased he had previously used, using a broader description like Trier's Quartier de la Princesse Rouge. This could narrow down the scope of the Tarot Club's investigation. However, he never expected Bouvard's corpse to directly reveal Voisin Sanson's room number.

To Lumian, this answer wasn't as useful as the Quartier de la Princesse Rouge. There were countless Room 7s in Trier.

Furthermore, what if Room 7 wasn't in Trier? It wasn't necessary to plan a conspiracy while in Trier!

Bouvard is a bestowed of the Inevitability pathway. He possesses the power of fate and the corruption left behind by the power of Inevitability… After his corpse consumed the Prophetic Concoction, it must have seen more than the average deceased and foreseen it more clearly. Is that why such a change occurred? Lumian muttered inwardly.

He then asked for confirmation.

“Ask him where Pualis de Roquefort from the Dariège region of the Riston Province in the Intis Republic is this time next week.”

After hearing the Witch’s relating it, Bouvard’s corpse responded with an illusory and ethereal voice, “Room 12.”

Room 12, Room 7… Madame Pualis and Voisin Sanson are indeed in the same place. The powerful bestowed of these cults in Trier are gathered together. They definitely aren’t here for food and drink… Lumian nodded slightly and quickly thought of what to ask next.

From the two responses, he vaguely guessed that it had something to do with where the evil god bestowed were. The Prophecy Spell appeared significantly interfered with and was unable to provide precise information. He could only ask in another manner.

A few seconds later, Lumian looked at Jenna and said, “When will Voisin Sanson leave his current building?”

This question aimed to determine the timing of potential catastrophe or the significant operation.

The strange scenes in Bouvard’s eyes quickly dissipated. After hearing Jenna’s question, he opened his mouth and replied faintly, “Rain, water…”

Suddenly, Bouvard’s eyes burst open, and blood sprayed from them, leaving behind two contaminated black and red cavities.

His body started to swell, becoming pale, dim, and moist, as if he had been submerged in water for an extended period.

In the blink of an eye, the corpse vanished from the sight of Lumian and the others, as if it had never existed.

Franca, clutching the mirror and preparing to cast a curse on the mutated corpse, lost her target. She frantically scanned the area but found only remnants of the exploded eyeballs.

Drawing from her limited experience, Franca speculated, “Could it be that an extraordinary event or entity was prophesied, leading to a horrifying backlash that dragged him away into the unknown?”

She sighed and added, “See, divination and prophecies are treacherous undertakings.”

Lumian nodded in agreement and suggested, “Let’s leave now and head to Bouvard’s residence to secure the remaining spoils of our mission.”

“Yes, we must be cautious,” Jenna said, gazing up at the ceiling. “What shall we do with Paulina and the other heretics? Should we eliminate them all?”

“I’ll take care of it! I’ll handle this!” Franca eagerly raised her hand. “I want to find some enjoyment, no—pleasure for myself!”

She wanted to simply act.

Observing the perplexed expressions on Jenna and Lumian’s faces, Franca retorted,

“What’s on your minds? I’m not talking about that! That’s not the only way to have pleasure!”

Doing something to entertain herself? Lumian scoffed and walked out of the activity room, leaving a parting remark. “You have five minutes.”

Five minutes? Franca muttered as she settled in front of the brass mechanical typewriter. Donning gloves, she swiftly typed on the keyboard.

Before long, Paulina, the butler, and the others who were securely bound had notes attached to them. The notes read:

“We’re heretics!”

“Our faith is in an entity known as Inevitability!”

“Arrest us!”

“Our leader is Voisin Sanson!”

“Voisin Sanson and his core subordinates have gone somewhere. It’s said that they’ll stay for three months!”

“They went there over two months ago!

“I have Regeneration, Danger Premonition, and Electric Arc. Please be careful!”

After pasting the papers, Franca scanned the notes with a sense of delight.

She then turned her attention to the unconscious Paulina and remarked, “A Dancer’s flexibility might help you escape the ropes. I can only add two more layers of unconsciousness to you.”

With that, she ignited Paulina’s Spirit Body with black flames, significantly weakening her. She followed this with the Bliss Society’s sedative.

Clap! Clap! Franca clapped her hands together and left the room, leaving behind black flames that burned all kinds of traces.

…

After ensuring the success of their police report, Lumian and his companions retrieved assets that could be quickly converted into cash from Bouvard's residence in the library district.

Reverting to his original appearance and taking a carriage back to the market district, Lumian was on the verge of inquiring Franca about something when he noticed a figure darting through the darkness outside the window.

The figure was dressed in a white shirt, black pants, and dark socks. Its eye sockets were hollow and empty, and its skin appeared swollen and pale, as if it had been soaked in water.

Bouvard Pont-Péro!

Bouvard Pont-Péro's previously vanished corpse!

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Chapter 447 - 447 Association and Speculation

447 Association and Speculation

Lumian's body tensed, then he quickly relaxed.

"What's the matter?" Anthony Reid inquired of Lumian.

Lumian chuckled. "Nothing."

Franca, seated across from him, remarked, "Your smile and your responses always make me suspect you're up to no good!"

Lumian's lips curved into a smile.

"When you assume I'm up to no good, only to discover I haven't done anything, could it be seen as a conspiracy?"

"Why does your sister always teach you such things?" Franca critiqued, sounding "severe."

Jenna glanced at Lumian but didn't press for more information. She remained on guard.

The four-wheeled rental carriage returned to Rue des Blouses Blanches in the market district. The team didn't immediately go their separate ways. Following Lumian's suggestion, they gathered in Franca's apartment to discuss Bouvard's "confession" and prophecy.

As Lumian closed the door, he suddenly spoke, "I need to use a bedroom."

"Now?" Franca's smile faded.

She sensed the seriousness in Lumian's tone and, considering the earlier events, realized that something had indeed occurred.

"Yes," Lumian replied, heading toward Franca's bedroom and closing the door behind him.

Jenna, Franca, and Anthony Reid exchanged glances but remained standing. They each took positions beneath the glow of the gas wall lamp, neither too close nor too far from one another.

In just three to four minutes, Lumian reemerged from the master bedroom.

Franca peeked inside and noticed that the curtains in her bedroom were drawn.

Lumian surveyed the area and smiled before Franca could voice her question.

“Let me introduce you to a friend, but I need you to turn off the lamps first.”

“What friend? You’re acting all strange. You can’t even speak properly after becoming a Conspirer,” Franca muttered as she turned the knob valve at the bottom of the black gas wall lamp.

Jenna murmured, “He didn’t like to talk nicely before either. It always felt like a Provocation…”

Soon, the lamps were extinguished, plunging the living room into darkness. Only the crimson moonlight and dim starlight near the window provided some visibility.

Franca, experienced, asked thoughtfully, “Do we need to activate Spirit Vision?”

“I don’t think so…” Just as Lumian finished speaking, he saw a face reflected in the dark glass window.

The skin on the face was puffy, pale, and moist. The eyes were empty, save for two black holes that were dyed red!

Bouvard Pont-Péro’s vanished corpse reappeared!

Jenna, who had little experience with such situations, took a step back in fear, and black flames ignited in her palm.

“Has… has it been following us?” Franca had already taken out a mirror.

“That’s right,” Lumian said with a relaxed smile. “According to my observations, it only appears in a very dark environment. As for when it will attack us, I’m not sure yet.”

“Aren’t you worried or nervous? This thing is a severely corrupted mutated corpse. No one knows what terrifying abilities it possesses.” Franca was affected by Lumian’s relaxed attitude and didn’t rush to deal with Bouvard Pont-Péro’s corpse, which had its face pressed against the glass window.

Lumian chuckled.

“Shouldn’t you be happy to see an old friend again?”

He paused for a moment and explained simply, “I regretted not being able to prevent Bouvard’s corpse from vanishing.

“Although its prophecy has been interrupted, the source of the corruption and the backlash it suffered, as well as its traits, can point to many problems and some hidden entities.

“Isn’t this also a clue?”

Just as Lumian finished speaking, Bouvard Pont-Péro’s bloated corpse, as if drowned, suddenly fell backward. It was as if someone had grabbed his collar and yanked him out of the living room window.

Behind him, the darkness intensified, as if a strange tunnel had opened, leading to an unknown destination.

In the depths of the tunnel, specks of starlight flickered in the distance.

Bouvard Pont-Péro’s eyeless corpse plummeted into the tunnel, accelerating and shrinking until it vanished entirely, swallowed by darkness.

“I just found a helper.” Lumian’s smile persisted.

Even if the four of them could easily deal with Bouvard’s mutated corpse, Lumian didn’t think anyone present could carefully investigate and determine the source of the problem while ensuring their safety. They had to seek help. In that case, it was better to seek help from someone capable from the beginning.

Entering the room to write to Madam Magician… Franca came to a realization and didn’t probe further.

Jenna also guessed that the secret organization that used tarot cards as their code name had taken action.

Their members were connected by messengers!

Anthony Reid pondered for a moment and asked, “So, the next step is to await the autopsy report?”

He looked at Anthony Reid and gestured towards the divan, signaling him to take a seat.

“Did you find anything in your investigation of the Dreamseekers charity organization?”

It was a private charitable organization that had received a substantial donation from General Philip’s widow.

Anthony Reid shook his head.

“No. In the past two months, they’ve been operating very regularly. There were no abnormalities. Perhaps, as you said, the key members of the heretics have gone somewhere. The rest have been instructed to behave themselves for the time

being."

Lumian nodded slightly and turned to Franca, who had settled into the recliner.

"Do you know what happened to the Bliss Society?"

"It's similar to the Sinners. They've eliminated several key members, but the two most important ones seem to have vanished. They must have gone to that place too," Franca recounted the information she had obtained from Browns Sauron.

'They' referred to the Demoness Sect.

That place… Lumian leaned back on the sofa, his mind racing as he searched for any possible clues.

Ultimately, his thoughts settled on the prophecy made by Bouvard Pont-Péro's corpse.

"Room 7, Room 12… Where could it be?"

Anthony Reid pondered and said, "If it were a private house, there wouldn't be such a numbering scheme."

"Sounds like an apartment."

"Or a hotel," Franca added.

Hotel… Hotel… Lumian's eyes widened as a bolt of lightning flashed through his mind, illuminating a detail he hadn't previously found problematic.

After he and Franca killed Beatrice Incourt, a key member of the Bliss Society, they found a note on her body. It read:

"Go to the hostel and retrieve the painting within three days."

Isn't a hostel a lower-class hotel? Isn't it normal to have Room 7 and Room 12? Lumian's thoughts instantly became clear.

At the time, he had thought that the note belonged to Beatrice, disguised as Theresa, who had purchased the receipt for a painting. Now, it seemed that the note belonged to Beatrice, a key member of the Bliss Society. It was very likely sent by the Bliss Society's high priestess, Siber, who resided in the hostel, for Beatrice to retrieve a painting!

"Hostel…" Lumian uttered the term.

Is that where Trier's numerous evil god bestowed go?

Franca, who had overheard Lumian's question about Theresa, remembered the note's contents.

Her excitement was palpable as she turned to Lumian and asked, “Did Voisin Sanson, Pualis, and the others go to that place with the codename ‘hostel’?”

Lumian replied slowly, “We still need to confirm it,” before swiftly inquiring, “Has Theresa, the art dealer, returned?”

He had questioned Browns Sauron about Theresa’s whereabouts upon discovering the note. According to the member of the Demoness Sect, the art dealer had been sent to St. Millom, the capital of the Feysac Empire, for a business deal, allowing Beatrice to impersonate her without raising suspicion.

Franca responded uncertainly, “She should be back. It’s been quite some time.”

She hadn’t paid much attention to the ordinary art dealer’s activities.

Jenna, perplexed, interjected, “What’s this about a hostel and an art dealer?”

Franca briefly explained, omitting Browns Sauron’s involvement, attributing it to an operation against the Bliss Society.

Anthony Reid, after careful consideration, voiced his thoughts, “The problem now is that even if the ‘hostel’ is indeed where the heretics gather, we still don’t know what it refers to or where it is.”

Lumian sighed softly and flashed a smile. “It’s better than having no direction.”

He then turned to Franca and said, “Ask about the real art dealer, Theresa’s residence tomorrow. I want to visit and confirm if the note belongs to her or Beatrice.”

“Understood,” Franca replied enthusiastically.

She had two motives: pressing Browns Sauron to determine when the assessment period would end and contributing to averting the impending catastrophe.

Back in her gaming days, she often chose storylines that involved saving humanity. Only when she grew bored of that did she experiment with something different.

Sigh, the phrase Demoness doesn’t quite align with preventing catastrophe… Franca sighed inwardly.

Lumian shifted his attention to Anthony Reid, pondering for a moment before revealing his plan,

“Since they’ve all been behaving themselves, it’s our turn to misbehave.”

Anthony Reid, catching Lumian’s drift, asked in confirmation, “What do you mean?”

Lumian’s smile broadened.

“We’ll abduct General Philip’s widow and the true controller of the Dreamseekers Charity Organization and interrogate them!”

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Chapter 448 - 448 The Power of Painting

448 The Power of Painting

The next morning.

Madam Magician has unearthed clues from Bouvard's tainted remains? Lumian's spirits soared with anticipation. He expressed his gratitude to the messenger and proceeded to unravel the letter's contents.

"We possess limited knowledge regarding the evil gods beyond the barrier. The Hostel and its location still eludes us, but we have formulated some conjectures.

"In examining Bouvard Pont-Péro's corrupted remains, I discerned a corruption bearing a resemblance to the Apprentice pathway—a contamination from alternate dimensions and spacetime. Had I not intervened, unless it had manifested and attacked, you would not have been able to make direct contact with it.

"In the past, we've encountered similar instances, primarily involving artists, writers, and avid readers.

"We've observed that painters often descend into madness, but due to their artistic disposition, their ramblings and abstract fantasies often go unnoticed. Some of these musings unveil profound truths about our world, while others exert an uncanny influence on their surroundings, turning the fictional into reality. They emerge from canvases or pages, though their presence typically has a time limit.

"An example involved an artist who, under the influence of a psychotropic substance, painted an indescribable creature. This entity materialized from the canvas, murdering its creator and any other living beings in the apartment.

"I once encountered a perilous artwork, a Sealed Artifact that resembled a painting. The deity portrayed within it came to life and vanished, thankfully without triggering a catastrophe.

"Similarly, while confronting a deranged heretic, we encountered Gehrman Sparrow, the Queen of Ailment, and various characters and scenes that were originally confined to novels within the structure he inhabited.

"Fortunately, these manifestations lacked the full potency of their original counterparts. They possessed only a rudimentary semblance of their appearance, personalities, and abilities.

“It was confirmed that these creations were the handiwork of a deranged bestowed of an evil god. He had been a fervent reader of novels and, upon losing his sanity, instinctively recreated a fantastical realm within his abode, mirroring the content of the novels.

“From this standpoint, it also bears some resemblance to the Spectator pathway, but it is fundamentally distinct. One derives its power primarily from the mind, while the other seems to harness the qualities and might of alternate dimensions or alternate spaces to manifest entities. Initially, it might function as a gateway or perilous portal, but in time, it could evolve into a near-real alternate space or even an entirely separate world.”

As Lumian absorbed the contents of the letter, his eyelids twitched with a whirlwind of thoughts.

His initial reaction: Is this something I can read?

While some portions seemed manageable, others, particularly the elaborate examples and analysis, left Lumian’s mind in turmoil. His heart raced, and he felt a peculiar tightness in his skin.

A deity from a painting coming to life and stepping into reality?

Is it that terrifying?

If the painting hadn’t been sealed, wouldn’t it be able to destroy the entirety of Trier?

Given more time, the entire world might have been finished!

Amidst this mental storm, Lumian’s mind struck upon an idea.

It was akin to a resurrection.

While his heart pulsated with the desire to attempt such a feat, rationality won the battle within his mind. The Aurore “resurrected” through this method would likely be a perilous entity, masquerading as Aurore, rather than the genuine person. If it was merely her appearance he sought, he could achieve it at any time with Lie’s abilities.

If it was merely her appearance he sought, he could achieve it at any time with Lie’s abilities.

In the wake of this realization, Lumian’s thoughts turned to a mystical item he hadn’t employed in quite some time: the Mystery Prying Glasses!

The brown gold-rimmed Mystery Prying Glasses, originating from a deceased Beyonder, held a mysterious and intriguing history. Its previous owner had crafted an oil painting infused with madness, vibrant colors, and a mesmerizing, psychedelic pattern before their untimely demise.

When Lumian put on these Mystery Prying Glasses, the world around him transformed, revealing hidden truths that were once invisible. Occasionally, these revelations kindled a desire to sketch, resulting in drawings imbued with supernatural power, each with unique effects. For instance, they could cause an itching sensation across his body, ushering in warmth and radiant sunlight, aligning with Madam Magician's account of paintings by evil god bestowed that influenced their surroundings.

With the abilities granted by the Niese Face and Lie earring, Lumian no longer required the Mystery Prying Glasses for disguise. However, he retrieved them from his pocket and pondered for a moment.

Was its original owner a bestowed of a Hostel-related pathway, or did it come into contact with a corresponding item and suffer a certain level of corruption?

Yes, I'll report to Mr. K later and inquire about further details. Uh… The Aurora Order is fanatical about hunting heretics. Perhaps they possess more information about evil gods than the Tarot Club. Mr. K might know something about the Hostel…

Lumian was part of four different secret organizations and could gather information from four unusually well-developed information systems. As a result, he didn't have an urgent need to participate in mysticism gatherings. He only visited occasionally to join in the fun and listen to rumors and stories.

After stowing the Mystery Prying Glasses, Lumian continued reading the letter's content.

"Until now, the evil god bestowed following this pathway have been relatively passive, avoiding bloodshed and not frequently engaging in sacrificial rituals. Even if they did, it was usually confined to themselves and those in their immediate vicinity, minimizing the danger.

"However, their nature may not be as 'harmless' as previously believed. They could pose a significant threat.

"You might want to consult Termiboros about the Hostel. He possesses the most extensive knowledge of these evil gods and their bestowed. Although, don't be surprised if He chooses not to share."

Lumian set the letter ablaze with crimson flames and whispered with a chuckle, "Termiboros, do you know the meaning of Hostel and its association with which evil god?"

Termiboros's majestic voice resounded. "Not an evil god, but a great existence."

After retorting, He answered Lumian's question, "I'm aware."

Then, there was nothing else.

This provoked Lumian.

Was I hoping to hear you say you are aware or not? What I wanted to know what it represents and to which pathway it belongs!

After pressing further, Termiboros asked in a deep voice, “Do you truly wish to know?”

Lumian, sensing danger, responded cautiously, “There’s no need for an honorific name or other details about the evil god. Just describe the situation and characteristics of the corresponding pathway of Hostel.”

Termiboros fell silent, withholding the requested information.

Lumian scoffed, believing that the entity’s response indicated: “I have nothing to lose. Why not give it a shot? What if my vessel suddenly turned foolish?” Termiboros had no intention of revealing details about Hostel.

…

As Lumian made his way to Avenue du Boulevard, Franca had already met up with Browns Sauron.

Both were clad in hunting attire, armed with double-barreled shotguns, and positioned at the edge of the East Lognes Forest, where they took aim at wild deer hidden behind the trees.

“Browns, when will you f*cking end my assessment?” Franca stressed her original gender with a touch of stereotypical vulgarity.

Browns, her orange-red hair mostly concealed beneath a deerstalker hat, peered forward and responded, “Soon, soon.”

Franca, her frustration palpable, retorted, “Does the high-ranking Demoness in charge of Trier want to keep testing me indefinitely, or are you playing tricks?”

Browns, her trigger finger poised, stopped abruptly, a subtle change in her expression evident.

“Could it really be you?” Franca exclaimed in surprise.

Browns replied solemnly, “I merely suggested it. The higher-ups agreed.”

“Why on earth would she agree to such an absurd proposal? Is she your mother?” Franca cursed.

Bang! Browns squeezed the trigger, and the bullet pierced through the forest, narrowly missing the wild deer.

Watching this, Franca mused, Could they really be related, or perhaps they're intimate lovers?

The Demoness Sect is essentially a family, and it's common for members to have some familial connections…

The Sauron family once held sway in the neighboring Assassin pathway, so it's not inconceivable that the Demoness Sect has infiltrated certain branches over the years.

Observing Franca's silence, Browns cleared her throat and made an offer, "If you promise not to partake in the Red House Café's orgies, your assessment will end this week."

"…" Franca fought the urge to curse and burst into laughter instead. "Haha, I'd call you 'pure,' but you're quite the expert in female orgies. As for 'promiscuous,' you're selective with your participants."

Without waiting for Browns's reply, Franca continued, "I can promise that. Besides, I can organize orgies myself."

Her true intentions were rooted in the impending catastrophe that might engulf Trier in a week or two. She needed to swiftly infiltrate the Demoness Sect and procure valuable information. After the crisis subsided, and if she was still alive, she could contemplate participating in Browns's orgies.

A true man could be indulgent and flashy, but when necessary, he could bear personal hardships.

Browns turned her head to scrutinize Franca, who met her gaze without a hint of guilt.

After almost ten seconds, Browns whispered, "Remember what you just said."

Franca responded with a smile, signifying her agreement.

With the assessment period now set to conclude, Franca raised her shotgun and shared,

"Some time ago, Ciel and I ventured into the catacombs and reached the Krismona Night Pillar. I had a peculiar feeling about that pillar. Could it have been left behind by a Fourth Epoch Demoness?"

After hearing about the sigh from Jenna, Franca had become intrigued by the Krismona Night Pillar.

"Ciel? Your lover?" Browns turned to Franca.

Franca replied candidly, "Yes."

Browns fell into a brief silence before revealing, “Krismona is indeed a Fourth Epoch Demoness. S-She is the child of the Goddess.”

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Chapter 449 - 449 Tracking Clues

Chapter 449 Tracking Clues

<nulli>A child of the Goddess… Franca jumped in fright, almost causing the double-barreled shotgun, which wasn't aimed at the target, to discharge accidentally.

She glanced at Browns and sought confirmation, "A child of the Primordial One?"

Even though her assessment period wasn't yet over, she had already passed the audit and was now considered an associate member of the Demoness Sect. She knew that this secret organization worshiped the deity known as the Primordial Demoness, often referring to Her as the "Primordial One."

Browns nodded slowly and replied, "As far as I know."

The Primordial Demoness had once given birth? Franca couldn't hide her curiosity and asked, "Who is Krismona's father?"

"I don't know," Browns cautioned Franca. "That's not something we should be privy to."

<nulli>This is a scandal at the deity level… Franca thought to herself and shifted the conversation to her primary reason for coming to Trocadéro today.

"Has Beatrice Incourt returned from the Feysac Empire? Do you know where she is residing?"

"Why do you ask?" Browns inquired warily.

In her eyes, Franca Roland and her lovers were powerful and dangerous Beyonders. Only Jenna, who lived with her, seemed relatively ordinary.

Franca chuckled.

"Yesterday, I helped Ciel exact revenge and apprehended a heretic who believed in Inevitability. From him, I learned that many of Trier's bestowed individuals have disappeared to some mysterious and strange place."

"Based on the information he provided, we suspect that the 'hostel' mentioned in the note about Beatrice is the destination for these bestowed of evil gods. We want to confirm with Theresa whether the note is intended for her or Beatrice."

Browns felt uncomfortable hearing Franca mention heretics and the bestowed of evil gods.

In the world of mysticism, the Primordial Demoness had always been considered an evil goddess.

Of course, their sect, followers of the Primordial Ones, believed they were devoted to an ostracized true god, an existence shrouded in secrecy.

After Franca finished speaking, Browns replied, “There’s no need for you to seek out the art dealer. When we discovered that the Bliss Society’s high priest and another key member had vanished, we patiently waited for Theresa’s return based on the contents of the note.

“She told us that she doesn’t know what the ‘hostel’ is, and she hasn’t purchased any artwork from any painter staying at a motel.

“We’ve verified the authenticity.”

Franca felt a growing frustration and said, “It’s really a message meant for Beatrice. Judging from the note, Beatrice knows the location of the ‘hostel.’ Otherwise, she wouldn’t have the ability to retrieve the painting within three days.

“If only we had found the note first and performed the spirit channeling afterward…”

A realization struck Franca, and she sensed that fate was playing a cruel game in this matter.

It seemed like fate was conspiring to keep information about the “hostel” hidden.

<nulli>Is Inevitability’s power at play, or is it the evil god pathway that Ciel previously mentioned, using death to escape its original fate? Is information about the “hostel” destined not to be leaked? Franca’s thoughts raced as she felt an increasingly abnormal aura surrounding the situation.

Seizing a rare opportunity, Browns immediately struck Franca down.

“Aren’t you guys quite experienced? You conducted spirit channeling without thoroughly examining the corpse. The hour after death is prime time. There’s no need to rush.”

Franca considered explaining that fate might be at play, but she decided against it.

Why should she warn Browns and give her a lesson?

It was better to keep her in the dark, potentially for future exploitation!

Franca looked at Browns and clicked her tongue, saying, “You’re quite the talker…”

Before she could finish her sentence, she extended her right hand with a smile and gently grasped the other party's chin.

"I don't mind skipping your orgies, but I'd like to undergo your 'assessment.'

"Are you up for it?"

Browns instinctively pushed Franca's right hand away, taking a step back and saying, "If you acted like a regular woman, I might consider assessing you, but right now…"

Her implication was that Franca's current demeanor resembled a libertine, a playboy who embraced Dandyism.

"You're a tough one," Franca scoffed, her words, though unusual, comprehensible to Browns.

She picked up her double-barreled shotgun and strolled into the forest without further conversation with Browns.

…

On Avenue du Boulevard, 19 Rue Scheer, at the base of the luxurious beige house,

in the basement, Lumian once again met Mr. K, who was cloaked in a black robe and a wide hood.

He had already reported the unusual silence of the cults to his superior, and Mr. K had verified this information after an investigative period.

Today, Lumian's focus was on Bouvard's corpse's prophecy, his own thoughts, and the Sinners' situation.

He relayed the information he received from Madam Magician as Bouvard's confession, including having seen a painting with strange powers from Voisin Sanson.

Finally, Lumian presented the Mystery Prying Glasses.

"Mr. K, has this mystical item also been affected by the Hostel pathway's influence?"

Mr. K stood before a red armchair and spoke in a low, raspy voice, "Wait a moment."

With a soft clap of his hands, he summoned an attendant into the room and whispered something to him.

As Mr. K waited for the attendant to return, the entire basement fell into an eerie silence due to Mr. K's silence.

Lumian felt somewhat awkward in this silence and thought to himself, <nulli>Say something. Even sharing your faith would suffice. You can't just leave me standing here like a fool…

Of course, Lumian was well aware that Mr. K's silence was intentional, and he was likely communing with a deity or uncovering hidden information.

Before long, the attendant returned, holding an oil painting about half a meter in height and nearly 70 centimeters in width.

The painting depicted a dark forest, accentuating the turquoise grass illuminated by the sun.

Upon closer inspection, there was a white area on the grass that appeared to have been scratched, resembling a figure.

Mr. K finally spoke.

"It was discovered with the Mystery Prying Glasses. Apart from the mysterious and chaotic oil painting that can affect one's mind, there was also this artwork hanging on the wall.

"It was originally meant to be a portrait, but when we saw it, the person had disappeared from it. Only the scenery remained."

<nulli>Walked out of the painting? Lumian felt a sense of alarm as he recalled Madam Magician's example.

He chose not to share this information with Mr. K, considering Bouvard didn't seem to be well-informed.

"Did something abnormal occur that caused the portrait to vanish?" Lumian inquired.

Mr. K's hooded head nodded slowly.

"Perhaps it returned to life and left the painting.

"It could be the source of that Beyonder's anomaly."

<nulli>The Aurora Order appears to be quite knowledgeable… Lumian remarked sincerely, "A strange power, a horrifying phenomenon."

Mr. K added in his raspy voice, "We investigated fairly famous painters in Trier and found that, aside from a few who had completely lost their minds or even died long ago, most seemed relatively normal. However, there were instances of abusing psychotropic substances and alcohol-based drinks.

"Based on other information we acquired, we can confirm that it's not that painters easily become heretics of that pathway and gain corresponding powers. Instead,

the bestowed of that pathway gain the ability to create art and naturally become painters. However, only a small number of them specialize in painting. The rest blend into society and create their own works without publicizing them."

"Is the Sequence name Painter?" Lumian asked thoughtfully.

This seemed to align with the power.

"God says yes," Mr. K replied devoutly and zealously.

Lumian immediately lowered his head.

"What else does the Lord instruct us?"

"God has revealed that foreign visitors stay at the Hostel." Mr. K appeared satisfied with Lumian's attitude.

<nulli>Foreign visitors? Visitors from outside the barrier? Lumian's senses heightened as he became increasingly focused.

However, Mr. K didn't share further revelations. It appeared that this was all the divine guidance he had received.

Mr. K's raspy voice carried a hint of seriousness.

"Our most crucial task now is to locate the Hostel."

Without waiting for Lumian's response, he took two steps forward and continued, "The number of evil god incidents we handle pales in comparison to those holding official positions. Perhaps they have more information.

"It's inconvenient for me to directly intervene in this matter, but you can attempt to gather information from them through other means."

<nulli>The Aurora Order seeks collaboration with the authorities, not necessarily to prevent the catastrophe but to thwart the ambitions of these evil gods. For this purpose, they are willing to humble themselves and cooperate with the authorities… Lumian silently mused and solemnly agreed.

…

On the roof of Apartment 17 on Rue Doyle in the market district, Jenna, disguised to conceal her allure, met with Imre and Valentine.

She cast a glance at the verdant trees lining the street below and began, "I've got important information."

Valentine's expression turned serious.

"What information?"

He had been worried that the Assassin might inquire about the primary ingredient in the Witch potion, but now his attention was fully on work.

Jenna spoke truthfully, “I’ve received news that some individuals suspected of being followers of evil gods have gone to a place known as the Hostel.”

She didn’t mention the eerie silence of the evil god’s followers. With the help of 007, this had become a consensus among Trier’s official Beyonders. Jenna had already been given hints regarding what to focus on.

“Hostel…” Imre, who hailed from the Southern Continent, furrowed his brow slightly.

<nulli>Such a reaction… Jenna keenly sensed their reaction and posed a question, “Do you know what Hostel means?”

Imre and Valentine exchanged troubled glances.

They didn’t want Celia Bello to be fully informed, but if they kept her completely in the dark, she wouldn’t be able to assist in gathering the necessary clues. She needed some information to know what they wanted her to pay attention to.

After a brief pause, Imre carefully composed his words and said, “One of our colleagues once heard the term Hostel from a peculiar creature.”

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Chapter 450 - 450 Infiltrating Openly

Chapter 450 Infiltrating Openly

<nulli>They really know about the Hostel… Jenna couldn't hide her curiosity and concern.

"What kind of peculiar creature was it? What did it say?"

Imre glanced at Valentine before responding, "Under normal circumstances, it's an invisible creature. You can only confirm its existence through some traces and see if it's lingering around you."

Valentine explained eagerly, "From what I understand, it exists somewhere between the spirit world and reality. It's untouchable and difficult to detect with Spirit Vision. It's in a very peculiar state."

"I don't think that's all. According to the dossier, there are a few conceptual and abstract aspects about it. In short, you can only perceive it or sense its form through its reactions—if it's willing—or when it attacks you," Imre corrected Valentine.

<nulli>Th-this is very similar to Bouvard's condition after his corpse was corrupted… However, Bouvard's corpse wasn't that formidable. As long as the environment is dark enough, it can be seen. Yes, according to Ciel, other than Beyonders of a few pathways who have reached a certain Sequence, it's indeed impossible to touch it directly and deal with it… Jenna made a connection and increasingly believed that the Hostel Valentine and company knew was equivalent to the one they knew, unless there were more than one of the same nature.

Imre, who had a habit of wearing skin-colored tape across the bridge of his nose, paused for a moment before continuing,

"If that peculiar creature hadn't attacked our colleague, it wouldn't have been discovered.

"We obtained several pieces of information from it. One of them mentioned the Hostel."

"What did it say?" Jenna played along.

Perhaps this contained the future direction of their investigation!

Valentine furrowed his brow.

“It only said that it comes from the Hostel—their home in this world.”

Jenna didn’t use her Instigation ability, but it was akin to instigation. “Is there any other information? Otherwise, I wouldn’t know how to help you gather information and who to watch out for.”

Imre hesitated for a few seconds.

“The rest of what it said isn’t suitable for you to know.

“Yes, it calls itself a Pixie.”

<nulli>Pixue… An untouchable pixie… The corresponding Sequence name of the boon’s pathway? Jenna nodded thoughtfully.

After a brief silence, Valentine said, “Our colleague encountered this peculiar creature in an artist’s studio.

“As for the painter, he was once treated for mental illness. He always claimed to travel with his Spirit Body every night and enter a strange space that’s neither in reality nor in the spirit world. He fought invisible creatures, strange souls, and evil spirits that attempted to invade reality through that space to protect the peace of the entire street.

“Such claims led to him being sent to the asylum for treatment for a period of time. Subsequently, he was under prolonged medication. Our colleagues confirmed that what he said might be true.”

“It sounds like he’s corrupted by an evil god… But why would he wander about as a Spirit Body and guard the street?” Jenna didn’t mention the term bestowed.

Imre smiled disinterestedly and replied, “The power of an evil god isn’t necessarily evil, but They often bring catastrophe or cause illusions and changes in the recipient’s personality. Can you accept that you’re no longer yourself?”

Jenna wanted to habitually respond using silence, but she remembered that there were two Purifiers opposite her, so she slowly shook her head.

Valentine’s tone remained anxious.

“We’re telling you this because we want you to pay more attention to painters, novelists, or those who have private hobbies of painting, reading, and telling stories. If you discover anyone’s abnormal behavior and language, report it to us immediately.”

“By the way, some painters’ works also possess a certain amount of supernatural power. That’s also one of the clues,” Imre added.

Jenna nodded solemnly. “No problem.”

…

Lumian, who had gathered a wealth of information from various sources, realized that although he and the others had a basic understanding of the Hostel pathway, they lacked substantial progress in their investigation. They still didn't know the location of the Hostel or the heretics' plans.

He had no choice but to turn his attention to General Philip's widow and the charity organization known as the Dreamseekers.

Late at night, at 9 Rue Lviv, Quartier 3, also known as the administrative district.

It was a three-story beige building surrounded by a garden, lawn, stables, a fountain, and statues.

"I was hoping to find an opportunity to ask for your help. I could use the ritualistic dog skin to infiltrate this place and search," Anthony Reid, with his buzz cut, said, glancing at Lumian beside him.

Lumian let out a chuckle.

"Official Beyonders can't afford to worry about such trivial matters in the current situation."

As he spoke, he crossed the street towards the beige building with sculpted outer walls.

The two of them circled to the side of the garden and watched as the two valets passed by together and turned to the front.

Lumian leaped up, pressing his hand against the white-painted iron fence. He stretched his body and leaped over, landing silently.

Anthony Reid was a seasoned veteran who had been forged by the crucible of the battlefield and maintained a habit of exercising. Although Sequence 9 to 7 of the Spectator pathway didn't significantly enhance his combat techniques, nor did his physique improve significantly, it didn't prevent him from easily vaulting the fence and entering the garden.

Lumian didn't bother concealing himself. Holding a top hat, he left the garden with one hand in his pocket and approached the main building.

Occasionally, he paused, avoiding the gazes from inside the building's windows and the maid who was eager to return to her room.

Before long, they arrived at the side door.

The wolf-shaped dog guarding the area had already fallen asleep.

Anthony Reid guessed that it was the doing of the two Demonesses who had long concealed themselves and whose whereabouts were currently unknown. However, he felt that if that was the case, why act as if they were infiltrating?

Lumian seemed to sense the Psychiatrist's thoughts and smiled.

"The sedative we obtained from the Bliss Society is very effective. We have to use it sparingly."

Furthermore, the Demoness Sect had already purged the Bliss Society once, leaving only two key members and Maipú Meyer, who was currently hiding in the market district. For the time being, no one was available to provide Lumian, Franca, and the others with supplies. Of course, the Demoness Sect had definitely gained a lot. After Franca passed the assessment, she should have a chance to obtain something from them.

Lumian walked past the unconscious dog, retrieved a wire, and expertly opened the side door of the building.

At that moment, almost all the lights in the house had been extinguished, and the corridor was shrouded in darkness.

With one hand in his pocket and the other clutching his top hat, Lumian made his way upstairs to the master bedroom, openly treating it as though it was his own home.

<nulli>Last time, he hid behind the scenes and instructed his partners to set traps. This time, he's using himself as bait to lure out potential problems? Different choices and different acting methods for a Conspirer? Anthony Reid followed Lumian from behind, enlightened.

Lumian reached the third-floor master bedroom. Along the way, he took a detour and climbed up from the second-floor balcony, avoiding the bodyguard at the staircase.

Gazing at the vermilion door, he chuckled and said, "After General Philip passed away, didn't his widow receive the protection of Beyonders?

"The bodyguards they hire with their own money can only scare off ordinary thieves and bandits."

"There are Beyonders, but Beyonders working as bodyguards not only charge a high price, but they also have an attitude. They typically don't do night duty," Anthony Reid recounted his observations during this period. "Let's pay attention to our volume later."

"At a time like this, the benefits of being a Sleepless will be revealed," Lumian responded in a deep voice as he used the wire to open the master bedroom's door.

Sleepless was a Sequence 9 of the Evernight pathway, renowned for not needing much sleep while staying vigorous.

Anthony Reid followed Lumian into the room and closed the wooden door behind him.

Then, Lumian donned a black top hat and lit the gas wall lamp on the wall.

In the yellowish light, they saw a woman wrapped in a silk blanket lying on the bed.

The woman stirred slowly, her wavy black hair framing a face that had seen four decades of life. Though traces of age marked her features, her skin remained remarkably smooth.

Her amber eyes gradually blinked open, revealing a faint yellowish glow. They fixed on Lumian's transformed face, courtesy of the Niese Face, and the black top hat.

Just as she prepared to speak, a cold muzzle pressed against her crimson lips.

"Relax. We're here for a small fortune and a few answers. If you cooperate, you won't get hurt," Lumian assured her with a smile.

Despite having her house broken into in the dead of night and held at gunpoint, General Philip's widow, Annis, didn't dare to resist. She nodded quickly, signifying her willingness to comply.

"Look me in the eye. I want to be sure you're telling the truth." Anthony Reid lit a cigarette and brought it to his lips.

Annis subconsciously met the gaze of the intruder, doing her best to convey her sincerity through her eyes.

She couldn't help but notice the robber's unusually clear, dark brown eyes, as if they held the key to his soul. The cigarette between his lips burned with a fiery red glow.

The red dot flickered…

After a while, Anthony Reid, who had used his actions, words, and demeanor to lull Annis into a semi-hypnotic state, delved into the depths of her Body of Heart and Mind.

"Why did you donate so much of your wealth to the Dreamseekers charity organization?"

Annis's Body of Heart and Mind replied without reservation, "It was in Philip's will. If I didn't donate two-thirds of my assets to that charity, my child and I wouldn't inherit the remaining third."

There is something suspicious about the Dreamseekers, and perhaps even General Philip too… Lumian found it difficult to believe the general to be that generous.

Noting that Annis continued her life without any disruptions and seemed oblivious to any potential issues with General Philip, Anthony Reid changed his line of questioning.

“Was Philip still a devoted follower of the Eternal Blazing Sun?”

The Psychiatrist believed that the general’s daily routines in a marriage were hard to hide from Annis, even when other problems remained concealed.

Annis’s eyes grew distant as she replied, “He hadn’t prayed fervently in a long time, and his praises were quite perfunctory.

“I overheard him whisper in the corridor once, ‘Goddess bless.’”

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Chapter 451 - 451 Fate's Prank

Chapter 451 Fate's Prank

<nulli>Goddess bless… Is he a believer in Evernight or an evil goddess? From the looks of it, it's likely an evil goddess… Lumian made a preliminary judgment as he listened to Annis's answer.

Simultaneously, he sighed silently.

<nulli>No wonder people who believe in evil gods love to convert their parents, spouses, and children into one. Otherwise, no matter how cautious they are, many details can't be hidden from their families who spend day and night with them…

Anthony Reid held the quietly burning cigarette in his hand and pondered for a few seconds before saying, "How did Philip die?"

The information he had gathered so far indicated that General Philip had succumbed to a sudden ailment, but that was the public declaration. The actual situation remained unknown.

Annis's tone drifted as she replied, "He had a heart attack in the middle of the night and couldn't make it to the hospital before he died."

Anthony Reid asked calmly, "Where's his body?"

"It was purified, cremated, and sent to the family cemetery in Quartier de l'Erato." What Annis said was public information.

Lumian turned to Anthony Reid.

"Ask her about the fate of his Beyonder characteristics."

He believed that Philip was definitely a Beyonder. After all, he had managed to rise up the ranks to general in the army, and he also came from an aristocratic family—the chances of him not being a Beyonder were slim.

After the Psychiatrist finished his question, Annis said in a daze, "What are Beyonder characteristics?"

Anthony Reid analyzed the mentality and knowledge of the individual and changed his question.

"Where did the thing that emerged from Philip's body go? Or did he have any special items on or around him? Where did it go?"

Annis recalled and said, “When the servant arrived to carry him downstairs to take the carriage, he told me with difficulty that if he died, there was no need to be surprised by any strange changes in his body. I was to stow away the thing that appeared and leave them for the children.

“L-later, too many things happened during the funeral, and I was too sad. That thing disappeared and was never to be found…”

<nulli>Never to be found… Lumian had long suspected that General Philip was faking his death. Now, he was more inclined to believe it.

He even felt that the other party’s Beyonder characteristics hadn’t truly emerged. The phenomenon Annis saw and the thing she had put away were an illusion created by a corresponding ability or ritual, and they naturally vanished in time.

Anthony Reid, who had discussed this matter with Lumian and the others several times, clearly had similar thoughts. His voice was calm as he asked, “What did it look like?”

Annis’s Body of Heart and Mind replied in a voice, “It was his fist. It turned skinless, and the joints were like black metal. They were very sharp, and they easily cut through the back of the chair…”

<nulli>The Beyonder characteristic fused with a certain part of the body, transforming into the potion’s main ingredient… Lumian was experienced in this.

Anthony Reid further inquired and confirmed that Annis didn’t have much information. She didn’t even know the Sequence of General Philip’s original pathway.

Seeing this, Lumian circled the master bedroom, and his gaze landed on a photo frame on the desk.

On it was a photo of Philip’s family, but color photography technology that had emerged in recent years wasn’t used.

In the family portrait, General Philip wore a high-ranking military officer’s suit adorned with numerous medals. He wasn’t too tall, and judging from the surrounding items for scale, he stood about 1.7 meters tall.

His hair was thick and slightly curled, and his eyes were small, but they had the sharpness of an eagle staring at its prey. The beard around his mouth was neatly trimmed, and the tip was even coated with paraffin. The bridge of his nose was unique, as if it had been broken and hadn’t healed, causing the middle section to bulge.

Lumian observed closely and memorized Philip’s exact appearance and characteristics.

If he had truly faked his death to escape his original fate, according to Madam Justice, this likely involved the loss of an old fate and the acquisition of a new one. It wouldn't alter his appearance.

In other words, the current individual was likely a stranger who looked identical to General Philip. Lumian hoped to recognize him at a glance if he encountered him in the future.

"Let's go," Anthony Reid concluded his Telepathy and said to Lumian in disappointment.

Lumian wasn't disheartened by the setback. He nodded gently and said, "To that charity organization."

The purpose of the charity organization, known as the Dreamseekers, was to provide assistance to outstanding young men who had come to Trier to pursue their dreams but had temporarily fallen into a predicament. To this end, even the staff employed such young men and provided them with free apartments.

The apartments were located in a house rented by the Dreamseekers. The lower two floors housed workplaces, and the upper two floors housed staff quarters.

Ossa, who controlled the charitable organization, also resided there, indicating that he was genuinely assisting the Dreamseekers and not seizing the opportunity to amass wealth.

After leaving Rue Lviv, Lumian and the others hurried towards Quartier 2, the arts and financial district.

Quartier 2 was very close to Quartier 3, where they were currently located. Before long, they arrived not far from Rue Saint-Varro.

The Dreamseekers was located in Building 11 there.

As soon as they alighted from the carriage and before they could approach the street where their target was, Lumian and Anthony Reid saw crimson flames rising in the dark night.

Fierce flames transformed a building into a colossal torch in the night.

Lumian's eyes narrowed as he had a bad premonition.

After exchanging glances with Anthony Reid, they sprinted towards Rue Saint-Varro.

<nulli>Thud! Thud! Thud! The two of them passed through an alley with a barricade and saw that the house that had turned into a fiery hell was Building 11. It was the office and staff quarters of the Dreamseekers!

The crackling flames soared into the air, sealing off the four-story building and scorching it black. No one cried out for help or attempted to leap down from the windows. It was as silent as if everyone had died long ago.

Residents of the street woke up and fled in a hurry, others wanting to help the firefighters or watching the commotion from afar.

Anthony Reid looked at the burning building and sighed. “We’re too late…”

Lumian stared intently for a moment before slowly shaking his head.

“No.

“Perhaps fate doesn’t want us to gain anything. No matter how early we arrive, we’ll see something similar.”

With so many evil god-blessed involved in the planning, investigations would inevitably encounter various forms of interference. Some were direct, some indirect, some seemingly normal, some rather bizarre, and some seemingly failing to gain fate’s favor.

Lumian paused momentarily before continuing,

“At least this means we’re on the right path.”

Anthony Reid fell silent for a few seconds before saying, “This indirectly proves General Philip’s connection to an evil god’s faith. My encounter with my comrades might stem from this…”

As he spoke, his voice trailed off.

Dozens of meters away from the burning building, Lumian’s face mirrored the fiery inferno as he gazed ahead, his voice steady.

“Do you still want to pursue this?”

“This situation is getting more perilous with each passing moment. It’s far more dangerous than the encounter with gunfire you’ve experienced before.”

“Up to this day, do you still wrestle with the fear from that night, the sounds of sudden gunshots? Do you truly possess the courage and determination to press on?”

Anthony Reid lapsed into silence. The middle-aged man, battle-hardened and weathered, remained contemplative for an extended moment.

Before them loomed a house engulfed in raging crimson flames. Masked firefighters in their red and blue uniforms, citizens in disarray, and chaos swirled around them.

After an uncertain pause, the Psychiatrist, his receding hairline and slightly plump face, spoke softly.

“Perhaps I perished in that attack. What remains is an avenging spirit, relentless in its pursuit of truth and retribution.

“I can be vanquished, but I can’t relinquish the pursuit. That’s what I felt when you mentioned the existence of leads and hope.”

Lumian offered a sly grin and turned toward Anthony.

“Welcome to the abyss of vengeance.”

…

Returning to the market district, Lumian wasted no time in composing a letter to Madam Magician, apprising her of the night’s operation and its final outcome.

He couldn’t shake the feeling that the current situation had stretched beyond the capabilities of his team. Regardless of the clues they unearthed, it seemed as though the threads of destiny conspired to sever them, leaving their investigations seemingly fated to failure.

This uncertainty gave Lumian pause, making him wary of delving deeper into the mystery, fearing that their actions might inadvertently endanger the slim glimmer of the less significant leads on your own. Termiboros resides within you—a heavy stone capable of stirring ripples in the River of Fate. He’s not easily swayed, unlike the hope they still clung to.

Before long, the “doll” messenger returned, bearing neatly folded papers.

“All fates intertwine to weave a grand drama.

“Should you come across any future clues, share the vital ones with me. Investigate the less significant leads on your own. Termiboros resides within you —a heavy stone capable of stirring ripples in the River of Fate. He’s not easily swayed, unlike the others.

“Furthermore, we shall make other attempts.”

<nulli>Other attempts… Lumian sensed that the Tarot Club had undertaken numerous clandestine endeavors, yet like his own, these investigations had ultimately proved futile.

Considering the Tarot Club’s potency, Lumian suspected that this case might be met with direct interference from angels or even evil gods.

After reducing the letter to ashes, Lumian reclined on his bed. As he prepared for sleep, he contemplated the direction his investigation should take.

“Linked to the Hostel, individuals engaged in painting, writing, and those with a penchant for reading tend to encounter trouble…”

In the whirlwind of his thoughts, Lumian’s mind settled on one person.

Gabriel, the playwright who had once taken up residence at Auberge du Coq Doré.

Gabriel had relocated to Rue Saint-Michel in Quartier 2, a district teeming with painters and authors. It was an ideal hub for artistic exchanges.

<nulli>Mr. K and the official organizations had only ruled out well-known painters and authors. Countless aspiring talents who hadn’t yet made a name for themselves flock to Trier. The investigation of all these hopefuls within a short span seems an insurmountable task. Moreover, many young dreamers pursuing artistic ambitions call this city home. The Dreamseekers had even thrown their records to the flames…

Lumian quickly reached a decision. At the break of dawn, he planned to visit Gabriel, inquiring whether the playwright had encountered any obscure authors or painters who had yet to garner recognition, or if any unusual anecdotes had circulated among these artistic circles.

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Chapter 452 - 452 Manuscript

Chapter 452 Manuscript

At noon the following day, Quartier 2, Rue Saint-Michel.

Lumian quickly realized that it was only a short distance from Rue Saint-Varro, where the Dreamseekers charity organization was situated, just a block and a square away.

<nulli>As expected of the arts district… Lumian raised his brows, feeling that he was drawing closer to the truth and edging ever closer to the answers he sought.

He glanced away from the Sun Obelisk standing proudly in the square's center and strolled along Rue Saint-Michel, tracing the path that winded past the ancient and weathered buildings.

He couldn't help but notice impoverished painters hunched over their sketchpads at the square's edge and along both sides of the street. Musicians played their diverse tunes with guitars, violins, and flutes. Every so often, white homing pigeons glided gracefully beside a fountain that sent water cascading in sync with the music.

The warm autumn sun cast a poetic charm over the scene.

Having spent a considerable amount of time in the market district, often consumed by thoughts of revenge, engrossed in investigations, or participating in banquets, Lumian had rarely immersed himself in the everyday life of Trier's core area.

Unfazed by the sunlight and the languid ambiance, donning a brown round hat, a light-blue shirt, and a casual brownish-yellow suit, he made his way into a bar named "Third-Rate Authors."

Here, most patrons sported well-worn attire, sipped affordable spirits, and engaged in animated discussions on various subjects. Occasionally, when inspiration struck, they'd retrieve well-thumbed notebooks and jot down their thoughts with the fountain pens they carried.

As Lumian approached the bar counter, he couldn't help but overhear a lively discussion among some of the patrons regarding the latest art exhibition.

"That piece called 'Cafe' is incredibly controversial. Some people laud it for its vibrant colors and audacious composition, seeing it as a silent protest delivered in an absurd form. Others think it's a deliberate attempt at abstract art, a ruse to dupe the public's intellect."

“I find it fascinating. The artist’s ideas are vividly depicted through those overlapping colors. Just think about it. Isn’t that how many cafés are? Noisy, bustling, with people from diverse backgrounds clashing and mingling like a chaotic blend…”

“I’m willing to call it a groundbreaking masterpiece of abstract art!”

“Are you talking about the kind of abstract art that’s never been recognized or sold?”

Lumian couldn’t help but think, <nulli>Café… Isn’t this the painting Mullen created using his buttocks? Someone genuinely holds it in high regard? Could it possibly become the most renowned and valuable work of his life? He pursed his lips, inwardly sighing. <nulli>You Trierians…

Upon reaching the bar counter, Lumian spent eight licks on a glass of absinthe and raised his voice.

“Everyone, I have a question. If anyone can provide the answer, this glass is on me!”

As all eyes in the bar turned towards him, Lumian spoke up:

“I’m looking for the playwright, Gabriel.

“I need him to write a script.”

In Rue Saint-Michel, nearly anyone one bumped into on the road could be an author or painter, let alone in a bar known for its literary discussions and artistic creativity.

Gabriel had frequent meetings with fellow writers and may even host private gatherings in his rented apartment. After all, “Lightseeker” had seen successful screenings and was quite popular, which would bring him significant benefits.

“He hasn’t shown up for a few days. He claims he’s locking himself away to finish a story,” a middle-aged man near the bar counter responded to Lumian’s inquiry with a smile. “He’s probably swamped with scripts. Would you consider other playwrights? There are several equally talented young folks around here.”

<nulli>Hasn’t shown up for a few days… Lumian furrowed his brows momentarily before relaxing.

“How will I know if I don’t give it a try? I come with plenty of sincerity.”

“Alright,” the middle-aged man in the tattered formal coat murmured. “I hope you won’t be disappointed.”

He led Lumian to 34 Rue Saint-Michel and climbed the stairs up to the fifth floor, near the attic.

The outer walls and stairs had a slightly outdated but still well-maintained appearance, and it was notably cleaner and more spacious compared to Auberge du Coq Doré.

“This is where Gabriel resides,” the bearded middle-aged man informed Lumian, rapping on the brown wooden door of Room 503.

A muffled sound echoed, but there was no response.

“Perhaps he’s out searching for food, or maybe he’s completed his work and gone to see the theater manager who commissioned it,” the middle-aged man suggested with a forced smile. “Would you like to return to the bar for another drink? I’m an experienced writer myself, though I’ve never ventured into script writing. My novels sell quite well in the underground market.”

“What have you written?” Lumian asked, glancing at the firmly closed brown door, showing no signs of anxiety.

The middle-aged man sighed and said, “I wrote ‘Monk Pursuing Dog’ and its sequel, ‘Dog Pursuing Monk,’ but they weren’t published under my name. For one, it would lead to my arrest by spies, and secondly, my boss wouldn’t permit it.”

“A sequel?” Lumian hadn’t visited an underground book market or a banned bookstore for some time. His last visit had been to purchase “Emperor Roselle’s Secret Chronicles.”

As he looked at the somewhat forlorn and slightly greasy middle-aged man, his perspective shifted.

He could be considered one of his initiates into the adult world!

“It came out last month,” the middle-aged man replied, nodding gently. “These two novels have made my boss a fortune, but I didn’t even get a tenth of that, no, not even a hundredth!”

“Boss?” Lumian inquired, recalling that Bard, a key member of April Fool’s, had once authored “Emperor Roselle’s Secret Chronicles.” He saw this as an opportunity to gain insight into the workings of this profession and prepare for future tracking.

The middle-aged man sighed again.

“We don’t have authorship rights, just writing tools for the boss. He pays us a fixed but tiny salary for our manuscripts, specifies the direction and requirements for our writing, and then sells them through his own channels.

“On Rue Saint-Michel, there are many third-rate authors like me who don’t even have pen names. We’re like assembly line workers.”

Lumian, showing respect, asked, “May I know your name?”

The middle-aged man replied, “Rabe.” His eyes were filled with hope as he gazed at Lumian.

Lumian probed further into the world of underground literature, gaining insight, and ultimately said, “If my attempt to reach an agreement with Gabriel falls through, I’ll consider offering you an opportunity.”

Rabe’s joy was palpable as he responded, “As long as the boss doesn’t assign me any new missions, you’ll find me here at Third-Rate Authors every day!”

Watching the underground author, an initiate for many Intis youths, descend the stairs, Lumian took a wire from his pocket and unlocked Gabriel’s door.

Compared to the playwright’s room at Auberge du Coq Doré, this space was considerably more expansive, encompassing a bathroom and a small bedroom. Beyond that, it served as a living area, study, dining room, and kitchen. A coal stove for cooking was neatly arranged in a corner.

Lumian quickly surveyed the room and noticed a jumbled stack of papers that resembled manuscripts on the desk by the window.

He shut the wooden door behind him and proceeded towards the desk.

<nulli>It’s Gabriel’s handwriting. Rabe was telling the truth. This is definitely Gabriel’s residence… Lumian mused as he held the stack of papers and began to peruse them.

Moving into the bedroom, he spotted a pair of black dungarees casually draped over the bed. The sight confirmed his earlier suspicion—he was in the right place.

This was a pair of pants Gabriel had frequently worn in the past.

However, the playwright himself was conspicuously absent.

Recalling Rabe’s statement that Gabriel hadn’t been seen for several days, Lumian’s caution escalated.

He meticulously examined every item in the room, much like a hunter tracking the movements of his prey.

After a few minutes, Lumian picked up a white-glazed porcelain cup with a single handle from the desk. He noticed that about a third of it still held cold water, with dust floating on the surface, too subtle for ordinary eyes to discern clearly.

<nulli>At least a day. Lumian’s heart tightened with concern.

<nulli>What could have happened to Gabriel?

<nulli>Was it possible that his prominence had attracted the attention of government spies seeking a “conversation”? Or perhaps he had unwittingly become the target of money-seeking kidnappers?

Setting the porcelain cup down beside the manuscript, Lumian meticulously combed the room, searching for any clues or signs of interest. His search yielded nothing of note.

Returning to the desk, he picked up the stack of manuscripts, eager to delve into Gabriel’s work before his unexplained absence.

The script told the tale of a struggling author who crossed paths with a woman coerced into joining a criminal organization. Together, they found solace in their shared despair, pain, torment, and the harshness of daily life. They offered each other encouragement and warmth, ultimately leading to the author’s recognition by the newspaper’s editor-in-chief and a steady income. His reputation steadily grew, while the woman, still trapped in her circumstances, chose to vanish.

Before the story could conclude, it ended with a passage about the lover’s disappearance and the author’s introspective musings:

“She’s here;

“My beloved has arrived from the night.

“She’s left;

“My beloved walked towards the distant hostel…”

The mention of the word “hostel” made Lumian’s forehead twitch.

Though it was an ordinary word in a script, it stood out to him due to his daily contemplations and associations, sparking connections in his mind.

His gaze suddenly shifted from the manuscript to the desk.

At some point, the white-glazed porcelain cup with a single handle, which he had moved to the manuscript, had somehow returned to its original place!

Lumian’s eyes narrowed, and the muscles under his clothing tensed.

As a Hunter, he had an unwavering memory for any alterations he made in his surroundings—it was a fundamental part of him!

<nulli>A creature that is challenging to detect with the naked eye and can only be confirmed by certain traces. Lumian silently recollected the information Jenna had relayed from the authorities.

Suddenly, he reached into his pocket and retrieved a pair of glasses.

They were brown gold-rimmed glasses—Mystery Prying Glasses!

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Chapter 453 - 453 Missing Author

Chapter 453 Missing Author

Lumian carefully positioned the Mystery Prying Glasses on the bridge of his nose, and immediately, the room seemed to whirl, and the ground beneath him trembled.

Suppressing his nausea and dizziness, he observed the scene before him fragment and overlap, creating a surreal and captivating tableau.

The bed pressed against the desk, which seemed to lean against the ceiling. Behind the ceiling appeared to be a tap, as if it were installed within a wardrobe. These scenes were like translucent canvases superimposed on each other, reflecting themselves in Lumian's vision.

A pale-white face materialized beside the wardrobe.

The face had disheveled brown hair, naturally parted. Dark-brown eyes glistened beneath black-framed glasses. It was Gabriel, looking cleaned up and as though he hadn't burned the midnight oil in a while.

The playwright gazed at Lumian with a vacant, distorted, yet strangely genuine smile.

His right hand reached out from the void, waving gently before his face shrank into the depths of the translucent layers, vanishing completely.

Lumian quickly surveyed the room, but Gabriel hadn't reappeared. He promptly removed the Mystery Prying Glasses, replacing them with the Eye of Truth on his left side.

This mystical item, composed of pale-white flesh and dark blood vessels, covered the corresponding ear, allowing Lumian to hear rapid voices from the distant horizon. The intertwined purple blood vessels formed a lens that adhered to his eye, revealing faint blood, layers of colors, and the room with a third of it blending into the surroundings. An invisible curtain resembling mullioned glass was also discernible.

The latter two phenomena rapidly dissipated or gradually returned to normal.

Before the whispers could become more distinct, Lumian removed the Eye of Truth and massaged his throbbing forehead.

Based on the combined information from both mystical items, he deduced that Gabriel had been corrupted by Hostel, becoming a presence that couldn't be

perceived or touched in the conventional sense.

However, the playwright retained a certain degree of rationality. He recognized Lumian and even happily bid him farewell.

Returning the white porcelain cup with a single handle to its original position seemed to serve as a greeting, an attempt to capture Lumian's attention.

Lumian frowned slightly. <nulli>Why does Gabriel seem to accept his transformation into a monster and was even pleased. When had he come into contact with Hostel?

His gaze shifted to the manuscript on the desk. The story in the unfinished script felt eerily familiar.

Lumian picked up the manuscript and read it meticulously, at a slower pace than before.

After perusing the first section, he confirmed that the protagonist of the script was Gabriel himself. The character's personality, the details of his life, the cold treatment he endured, and the demand to produce vulgar works all aligned seamlessly.

Regarding the female lead, who immersed herself in the underworld and persistently encouraged the male lead's creations, Lumian couldn't help but feel that if it weren't for the difference in gender, he could be the one with such a background.

However, the female lead's personality, her way of speaking, and her encouraging words were entirely distinct from his own. Even in the scenes involving the mobs, Lumian could discern traces of Charlie.

<nulli>In essence, the female lead's identity, background, and experiences in the mob appeared to be a blend of Charlie's and my situation. It was however someone else who interacted with the male lead. Gabriel had previously mentioned that only me and the human model Séraphine encouraged him at Auberge du Coq Doré. Charlie merely drank with him without mocking him or teasing him. A human model… that's right! The human model for a painter. Séraphine spent a night with Gabriel before moving out. Lumian rapidly connected the dots, sensing that the root of the problem might lie with Séraphine, the human model!

This woman had once accompanied a painter to a small seaside town as a model. After an extended absence, she returned to Auberge du Coq Doré.

Painter!

Could Gabriel have been corrupted on that night when Séraphine returned? Was it possible that Séraphine had moved to the Hostel? Lumian meticulously perused the script, leaving no word unread.

Since this was a story born from Gabriel's own experiences, it undoubtedly contained numerous factual details and genuine emotions—invaluable clues!

As Lumian continued to read the script, bathed in the sunlight filtering through the oriel window, he sensed the concealed love that resided within Gabriel's heart. He could feel the ache of remorse, reluctance, and the yearning for a relationship that Gabriel believed he could easily discard when he moved to a better neighborhood to start anew. In the end, he found himself unable to forget it.

The protagonist, increasingly aware of his heart's true desires and feelings, ceased to evade them and actively embarked on a quest to uncover traces of his beloved.

He sought out people who were acquainted with her, visited motels and hotels that occasionally haunted his dreams, and explored galleries in search of new artworks based on his lover…

Yet, his endeavors proved futile, leading him to compose the inner monologue.

<nulli>It ended here abruptly… I can't tell if he found Séraphine… Lumian placed the manuscript down in disappointment and decided to check the drawer for any drafts, outlines, or notebooks that might contain further information or inspiration.

Regrettably, the contents of the drawer only covered the first half of the script. By the time Gabriel had reached the second half, he appeared to have delved deeply into his emotions and penned his inner monologue in a single burst.

Lumian looked at the papers before him, pondering the situation.

<nulli>From the script and the other items in the room, it's apparent Gabriel hadn't managed to locate Séraphine…

<nulli>In other words, he hadn't actually come into contact with the Hostel…

<nulli>Furthermore, neither the script nor Rabe's description suggests that Gabriel exhibited any signs of corruption or boons until he ceased writing. While he was undoubtedly suffering from the loss of his lover, this was a typical emotional response…

<nulli>So, why had this person suddenly transformed into an untouchable, unseen monster? <nulli>Just knowing about the Hostel shouldn't lead to such a situation… <nulli>Apart from me being special, Franca and Jenna know about the Hostel. Anthony Reid, Theresa, the Demoness Sect member in Trier, Mr. K of the Aurora Order, and a large number of Purifiers of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church all know about it. There are ordinary people and Beyonders among them, but none of them are in trouble…

<nulli>Beatrice of the Bliss Society knows the location of the Hostel and aims to retrieve a painting, which was the reason Franca and I made a mistake. Bouvard of the Sinners prophesied a catastrophe associated with the Hostel, leading to his

corruption into a peculiar corpse. The Dreamseekers charity organization likely sponsored heretics connected to the Hostel, such as painters and authors, and they were destroyed at the slightest hint of exposure.

<nulli>What was the reason for Gabriel?

<nulli>Could he have recently encountered something that deepened his understanding of the Hostel, or perhaps he had found traces of Séraphine?

Lumian made a preliminary guess and conducted a thorough search of Gabriel's rented apartment with a clear objective in mind.

Nothing.

He then left 34 Rue Saint-Michel and made his way back to the Third-Rate Author bar, where he seated himself next to Rabe, who was engrossed in his drink.

"A glass of La Fée Verte," Lumian ordered as he tapped the bar counter.

Then, he turned to Rabe and inquired, "Do you have any idea where Gabriel has been over the past few days?"

Rabe pointed to a small round table near the window and replied, "You'll have to ask them."

As an underprivileged author working as a ghostwriter without a pen name, Rabe considered himself fortunate to know a rising star like Gabriel and attend his private gatherings. He had to work regularly every day to fulfill the missions assigned by his boss, preventing him from participating in their activities.

Guided by Rabe, Lumian approached the small round table and was taken aback upon seeing the four individuals seated there.

<nulli>Weren't these the same individuals who had discussed Painter Mullen's art spoof art, "Café"?

In response to Lumian's inquiry, the leader of the group responded with a puzzled expression, "We last saw Gabriel two days ago. We all went to the Trier Art Center together to attend an art exhibition."

<nulli>Art exhibition… Lumian's eyebrows twitched.

…

Trocadéro Town.

Franca, dressed in a white jacket, followed Browns Sauron, who wore a black coat, as they navigated through the manor adorned with grapevines.

With curiosity evident on her face, Franca, who had been invited, couldn't help but ask, "Where are you taking me?"

Browns cast a brief glance in her direction.

“I’m taking you to meet my teacher. You’ve successfully passed the assessment and are now an official member of our sect.”

<nulli>Browns Sauron’s teacher… A high-ranking Demoness? Could this person be the leader of the Demoness Sect in Trier? Franca’s thoughts raced as she smiled and inquired, “Does this mean I can enjoy the membership perks?”

The term “perks” was coined by Emperor Roselle and had gained recognition in Intis.

Browns maintained a bit of distance from Franca as she questioned, “What would you like in exchange?”

Without hesitation, Franca responded, “The potion formula for Affliction.”

Affliction was the name of the Assassin pathway’s Sequence 5, often referred to as the Demoness of Affliction.

Browns let out a scoff.

“Quite bold to make such a request. Do you believe you have accrued enough contribution points to ask for the potion formula for Affliction?”

She paused for a moment before adding, “Of course, if you can assist the sect in achieving something, this can be your perk.”

Franca, who had initially held limited hope and was merely testing the waters, glanced at Browns.

“And what’s that something?”

Seizing the opportunity, Browns explained, “We’ve received information that the Iron and Blood Cross Order discreetly smuggled an item into Trier through an underground tunnel several months ago. If you can uncover what it is and identify its possessor, you’ll be entitled to the Affliction potion formula.”

<nulli>A few months ago… The underground tunnel… Secret delivery into Trier… Franca suddenly recalled “Rat” Christo’s loss of his biological brother.

In an effort to aid the Savoie Mob’s smuggling leader in recovering his brother and the transported goods, she and Lumian had been drawn into a strange mirror world, where they narrowly escaped.

During their adventure, Franca had acquired a classic sterling silver mirror.

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Chapter 454 - 454 Hidden Honorific Name

Chapter 454 Hidden Honorific Name

<nulli>From the looks of it, the Demoness Sect attaches significant importance to that item… That's right. Given that this item had triggered the strange mirror world, it is highly likely that it was linked to the powers of the Assassin and Hunter pathways… Franca took a moment to consider and then admitted, "I know what you're referring to…"

She explained to Browns Sauron in the same manner they had explained the situation to "Rat" Christo in the past. In essence, she shared everything except the fact that she and Lumian had been drawn into a mirror world. Instead, they relied on Lumian's unique ability to escape and how she obtained a classic silver mirror that led them to the mirror world.

"According to the 'Rat,' his brother and many of his subordinates turned into monsters, including the reversal of their left and right hands. This attracted the Purifiers' attention were eliminated." Franca deliberately elaborated, probing Browns Sauron gauge her reaction to the appearance of the mirror people.

Browns displayed a slight furrow of her brow.

"How did the official Beyonders become aware that something was amiss?"

<nulli>She seems to know about the mirror people and their specific traits… Franca looked away and shook her head.

"For that question, you'd need to approach a Purifier, not me."

Without further discussion, Browns led Franca to a circular pavilion enclosed by grapevines and various vines.

Seated in the circular pavilion was a woman donned in a black court dress. Her bright dark gray eyes held a touch of sadness, and her neatly tied black hair featured a few loose strands, which cascaded naturally and added a hint of allure to her otherwise composed countenance.

Upon catching sight of the woman's slightly curved red lips, graceful jawline, and soft facial features, Franca was initially struck by the overwhelming beauty that met her gaze. However, her astonishment was quickly overshadowed by an unexplainable sense of sympathy.

Although she was taken aback and touched by a sense of heartache, it took nearly ten seconds for Franca to remember encountering this woman before.

She had seen her during her and Lumian's surveillance of the fake Theresa, Beatrice Incourt, at the concert. As the most beautiful woman in attendance, she had been invited on stage to take a photograph with the orchestra as a keepsake.

<nulli>Is she Browns's teacher, a high-ranking Demoness? It's no surprise; having a high-ranking Demoness overseeing the operation and ensuring its success… Franca was momentarily surprised but soon realized that this situation was in line with what she had anticipated.

What she hadn't expected was that this woman had openly followed them and even participated in a photograph on stage.

Browns Sauron introduced her teacher, saying, "This is my teacher, Demoness of Black Clarice."

<nulli>Demoness of Black… According to Madam Judgment, Demonesses with a color in their title are considered exceptional even among the demigods of the Demoness Sect. Some are even suspected of being angels. Franca placed her hand over her chest and offered a slight bow. In a polite and gentlemanly manner, she said, "It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Demoness of Black."

Franca avoided complimenting the woman's appearance. She understood that most Demonesses in the Demoness Sect took pride in their beauty while simultaneously harboring inner conflict regarding it. Compliments from outsiders were typically accepted with grace, potentially leading to some embarrassment. However, if Franca, who knew their true gender, were to offer such compliments, it might be perceived as provocation or mockery.

Demoness of Black Clarice nodded slightly and said, "Every member needs to believe in the Primordial One. You should have known about this more than a month ago. It's time to officially pray to Her."

Franca was not surprised at all. Secret organizations that worshiped evil deities typically required new members to open themselves to their deity, thus gaining a measure of control and filtering out most insecurities.

"We are all the children of the Primordial One," Franca responded devoutly and respectfully, adhering to Browns's guidance during this period.

"Recite the honorific name of the Primordial One with me in Hermes.

"The source of all catastrophes, the symbol of destruction and the apocalypse, the Demoness who controls Chaos…"

Although the Demoness of Black spoke in Intisian, the surroundings darkened significantly. The grapevines writhed gently, as though transforming into venomous snakes.

Franca remained composed and repeated the three-lined honorific name in Hermes.

Suddenly, she saw grapevines extending towards her.

They grew thicker and thicker, completely enveloping the circular pavilion.

One of the python-like vines extended toward Franca, and a dark-blue vertical eye opened at its tip.

It reflected Franca's figure.

The figure rapidly distorted, transforming into a man with a bloodied face.

The man had short flaxen-colored hair, slightly thick brown eyebrows, and lake-blue eyes. His lips were thin, and his appearance was ordinary.

Franca was taken aback. This face was familiar to her.

It was the face she saw in the mirror every day before consuming the Witch potion.

This was her past self, Franco Roland!

In the deep-blue vertical eye, Franco Roland's expression turned ferocious. His eyes held a tangible hatred, and his face was filled with a viciousness that could cause nightmares.

Franca's body stiffened, as if she had turned into a statue made of rock.

After staring at her for a few seconds, the vine with the blue vertical eye retracted into the canopy of grapevines, its eyes reflecting its unhappiness.

Franca finally felt her body. She blinked and saw that everything around the circular pavilion was normal. Sunlight pierced through the gaps between the vines and shone here.

There were no python-like vines, nor were there any blue vertical eyes. It was as if the bizarre and nightmarish encounter had never happened. All of it appeared to be a fleeting, surreal vision.

She lowered her head and completed her prayer.

As Franca continued her rituals, she couldn't shake the eerie experience from her mind. The connection between the Primordial Demoness and the underground mirror world was undeniable.

She had encountered her past self, Franco Roland, in the mirror world as well.

This time, it wasn't Franca reflected in the blue vertical eye either. It was Franca's former appearance—Franco Roland!

Clarice, with a black veiled hat on her head, nodded.

"Now, you're a child of the Primordial One."

"Thank you for your guidance." Franca smiled and inquired, "I thought the honorific name for the Primordial One would include a description akin to the Ruler of the Mirror World. I'm surprised it's not part of it?"

The Demoness of Black, Clarice, replied in a cold, indifferent, yet pitiful tone, "This isn't the complete honorific name of the Primordial One. There are two more lines you can't know right now."

<nulli>The Primordial Demoness has two hidden lines for Her honorific name? Franca suddenly felt that this detail revealed something, but she was uncertain about its significance.

Clarice continued, "Every new member receives a Primordial One statue. It possesses anti-divination and early warning abilities, and it can assist you in performing rituals. You must pray to it every day."

While speaking, she produced a bone statue, the palm-sized statue vaguely resembling a beautiful woman with hair that reached her ankles. Each strand of hair was intricately carved with distinct, snake-like eyes, some open and others tightly shut, densely packed and unsettling.

<nulli>Praying every day… Franca hesitated, deciding to be patronizing on this matter.

After Franca stowed away the Primordial Demoness statue, Clarice's brow furrowed imperceptibly.

"Keep a close watch on the Iron and Blood Cross Order, especially Gardner Martin. If they make any unusual moves, contact Browns immediately. If the situation becomes critical, retrieve the Primordial One statue, set up the altar, and perform the designated ritual. After completion, place the prepared letter into the mirror on the altar."

<nulli>Keep a close watch… Unusual moves… Franca extracted the key points from the Demoness of Black's instructions.

She sensed an impending catastrophe and couldn't help but grow anxious.

<nulli>Does the Demoness Sect believe that the Iron and Blood Cross Order is on the brink of launching a major operation?

…

In Quartier 2, outside the Trier Arts Center, Lumian stood on the steps, contemplating the authors' responses that flashed through his mind.

"Gabriel has been enjoying art exhibitions and galleries for the past month or so."

"He doesn't pay much attention to each painting. It's as if he's searching for the one his soul has been waiting for."

"There's nothing unusual about him."

"He didn't fixate on any other visitors at the exhibition."

"…"

The information revealed by these answers left Lumian puzzled about his next steps. Nonetheless, he had decided to visit the Trier Art Center to explore the art exhibition titled "Future Impressions."

It was scheduled to end in another two days.

Before arriving, Lumian had secured a hotel and a room for setting up a ritual. He summoned a messenger and informed Madam Magician about Gabriel's encounter and the direction of his investigation.

Initially, he had planned to relay the message from the bar's washroom, but he recalled that the "doll" messenger had severe mysophobia and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Consequently, he opted to spend a bit of money to find a clean and suitable place.

As he gazed at the colorful art center with its sun-like roof, Lumian took a slow breath and presented his ticket to enter the building.

"Future Impressions" wasn't a large art exhibition, occupying only three exhibition halls. Lumian strolled through, admiring the artworks displayed on the walls.

Suddenly, he spotted a familiar figure.

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Chapter 455 - 455 Two Children

Chapter 455 Two Children

Ludwig stood in front of a wall painting adorned with doughnuts, his young eyes fixated on the artwork. Sensing someone watching him, he turned around and spotted Lumian.

Lumian smiled and playfully teased, “Running away from home again?”

Ludwig, this time with more composure, replied, “No. I told my godfather that learning can’t be limited to textbook knowledge. It’s equally important to read more, hear more, and interact with other things.”

Lumian inquired, “And he brought you here to see the art exhibition?” However, he couldn’t spot Baron Brignais in the vicinity.

He noticed that Ludwig’s intelligence and knowledge seemed to have improved a bit, allowing him to come up with an excuse he had used before.

It appeared that learning was having a positive impact on him!

Ludwig nodded and added, “Yes. It’s important for a child to cultivate an appreciation for art from a young age.”

Lumian clicked his tongue and continued, “So, no textbooks, homework, or exams today?”

Ludwig responded, a joyful smile unknowingly plastered across his face, “It’s incidental.”

Internally, Lumian noted, <nulli>There’s been some growth, but not much…

At that moment, Baron Brignais, donning a silk top hat and a black suit, approached from the other side of the exhibition hall.

Lumian couldn’t help but make a mocking remark, “Aren’t you worried he’ll get lost?”

As a Conspirer, Lumian picked up on something unusual about this situation.

Given Brignais’s past anxiety when Ludwig ran away, he shouldn’t have left the child alone in the exhibition hall!

Brignais smiled and said, “Ludwig has been doing well recently and hasn’t tried to run away from home. He was engrossed in admiring the paintings, so I didn’t want to disrupt him when I went to the washroom.”

<nulli>Sounds like something an irresponsible parent would do, but Baron, you weren’t like this before. I suspect you did it on purpose… You deliberately left Ludwig alone in the exhibition hall to see what this strange child would do? Heh heh, you don’t have to worry about him. You have to worry about the surrounding visitors. If this guy gets hungry and you don’t provide food in time, I’m afraid someone will be eaten, Lumian criticized as he made a guess.

He sensed that Baron Brignais had an ulterior motive for arranging this visit to the exhibition. It was akin to leading an experienced hound to a specific occasion, releasing its ropes to see if it would track down certain prey.

After answering Lumian’s question, Baron Brignais, clutching his bulging briefcase, looked at Ludwig.

“When you get back, write an essay regarding the art exhibition, detailing your feelings and the work that left the deepest impression.”

Lumian was not surprised. He had plenty of experience being thrown into such a situation.

Regrettably, Lumian’s exploration of the three small exhibition halls yielded no significant findings. Instead, Mullen’s “Café” drawing, which he had created with his buttocks, drew the attention of numerous tourists, sparking both admiration and criticism.

Standing in the final exhibition hall, Lumian contemplated his next move. Retrieving his brown, gold-rimmed glasses, he decided to give them a try.

Since his unaided vision and Spirit Vision revealed no discernible issues, he opted to test the Mystery Prying Glasses from the same pathway!

Carefully positioning the glasses on his nose bridge, Lumian braced himself as the world around him seemed to spin and whirl. His focus remained on the scenes unfolding within his “vision.”

Each painting took on a life of its own, breaking free from the confines of the walls.

Some of the paintings seemed to regard Lumian with a chilling, penetrating gaze.

Initially taken aback, Lumian feared that something extraordinary was afoot with all the portraits, potentially placing him in a dire situation. However, he soon realized that he wasn’t under attack.

The figures within the portraits merely stared at him with silent and cold intensity.

It was as if they had attained a degree of consciousness and a sense of being, yet they hadn't fully emerged from their canvas confines to walk among the living.

A revelation dawned upon Lumian.

Through the lens of the Mystery Prying Glasses, he was witnessing another reality.

Perhaps, in some parallel aspect of the world, each painting held a semblance of reality. However, they remained two-dimensional, flat, and lacking in depth, incapable of significantly impacting the human realm or the spirit world. There might be exceptions, moments where extended contemplation of certain works induced feelings of delirium or anxiety.

It occurred to Lumian that Painters could potentially amplify the limited, flat nature of these objects, opening a pathway to the realm of the real.

In essence, the characters within ordinary paintings might possess an incomplete, condensed, and spiritually deficient existence in this two-dimensional, flat world. With the aid of the Mystery Prying Glasses, they were unveiled in their true form.

Likewise, Lumian's perception unveiled deeper truths—the artist's most profound creative intentions.

One painting depicted the future of Trier, a divided realm. On the surface, men and women reveled in lavish banquets, adorned in opulent attire. Beneath the surface, ragged individuals dwelled in dark tunnels, subsisting on earthworms, rats, and moss. Yet, through the Mystery Prying Glasses, Lumian glimpsed fat, glutinous pigs with oil oozing from their mouths on the surface. Below, grotesque, contorted visages and decaying hands reached upwards.

This was the true message the artist sought to convey.

In the next instant, Lumian spotted Baron Brignais and his godson Ludwig.

The former appeared unremarkable when viewed through the Mystery Prying Glasses, but there was a faint, brassy aura emanating from his form. As for the latter, something chilling unfolded as he abruptly turned his head, seemingly locking eyes with Lumian across two exhibition halls.

Ludwig's chubby face took on an unsettling transformation; his skin seemed to writhe, as if it were on the verge of shedding, and something from beneath the surface attempted to burrow out.

Lumian's heart tightened, and he instinctively removed the Mystery Prying Glasses,

instantly restoring the scene to its normal state.

He had always sensed that Ludwig was far from ordinary, but this encounter had sent his danger instincts into overdrive.

The true nature of the innocent-seeming human skin concealing the boy beneath remained an ominous mystery.

<nulli>Ugh… Lumian had worn the Mystery Prying Glasses for an extended period this time, and his discomfort was overwhelming. Despite the diminishing dizziness, he felt profoundly nauseous, with a painful ache in his stomach, a pressing need to vomit and tend to other bodily functions.

Even a Conspirer's constitution couldn't withstand this.

Taking a deep breath, Lumian made his way to the washroom adjacent to the three exhibition halls.

It was situated at the end of a long corridor adorned with statues and paintings, perfectly in line with the Trier Arts Center's ambiance.

Once inside the washroom, Lumian attended to his urgent needs, and after washing his face with cold water, he gradually regained his composure, with the discomfort dissipating.

Exiting the washroom, Lumian's gaze naturally drifted toward the opposite wall, where a series of paintings were on display.

One particular painting drew his attention, a macabre and enigmatic piece that gripped his senses.

It was an oil painting set against a vividly layered background, with a focal point on a naked woman.

Her face remained blurred, as if the painter had intentionally left it blank. On her body, distinct faces emerged, each bearing a different emotion—anger, hatred, malice, joy. Some of these faces resembled those of cats, others of dogs, and some appeared to exist solely in the realm of fantasy. What united them was their eerie, translucent yet lifelike quality.

As Lumian stared at this unsettling painting, a thought dawned on him.

During Gabriel's visit to the art exhibition, he had seemed perfectly normal, at least as per the accounts of the authors. But they couldn't have monitored his every move, especially during mundane activities like visiting the washroom!

…

Avenue du Marché, Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons.

Jenna had just stepped out when she spotted a familiar figure standing beneath a gas street lamp on the opposite side of the road.

It was a young boy, dressed in a white shirt, silver vest, black coat, and a mercury bow tie, his light-yellow hair neatly combed.

<nulli>The child who brought me good luck last time… that formidable Beyonder! Jenna exclaimed inwardly, taken aback. She instinctively crossed the street and approached the boy.

With a slight bow, she greeted him with a smile, “Were you waiting for me?”

The boy glanced at her and muttered, “I wasn’t waiting for you. You were waiting for me. You met me earlier than any other choice.”

<nulli>What’s the matter this time? Are you offering me good luck for the impending catastrophe and getting me to discover something? Jenna’s thoughts raced as she casually asked, “Didn’t you say that this direction was a little dangerous last time? Why are you here this time?”

The boy’s response was measured and earnest, “That day was that day, and today is today. Just because it was a little dangerous that day doesn’t mean it’s dangerous today.”

“Alright…” Jenna probed with a probing smile. “Do you need my help to buy you an ice-cream?”

The boy, however, responded with a long, almost adult-like sigh.

“It’s something else; I’ll pay you.”

<nulli>Pay? Giving me good luck? Jenna had a vague idea, but she didn’t inquire about the reward. She decided to cut to the chase, asking, “What’s the favor?”

The boy reached into his pocket and retrieved a gleaming golden coin, sidestepping her question.

“This will be your reward—a lucky gold coin.”

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Chapter 456 - 456 The Charlatan's Instructions

Chapter 456 The Charlatan's Instructions

The boy chuckled and explained, "This is a gold pound, more valuable than Louis d'or."

"You're not from Intis?" Jenna was taken aback, but she didn't think there was a problem.

The boy's appearance did differ somewhat from the locals.

"I'm Loenese," the boy with neatly combed, light-yellow hair replied honestly.

Jenna chose not to dig deeper, understanding that whether the coin was a gold pound or Louis d'or didn't affect its practical worth.

Based on their previous encounter, she trusted the boy's ability to bring good luck.

She looked at him, awaiting his next words.

The boy returned the lucky gold coin to his pocket, showing no intention of prepayment.

Instead, he pointed at the ground and said, "At ten tonight, enter Underground Trier from the entrance here. Proceed as far as you can, following any available path, until you reach an underground river.

"Find a hiding spot nearby and wait for the first person to pass by. Take all their belongings."

"Before completing this matter, you can't tell anyone what you want to do or where you plan to go."

Go underground purely based on intuition and rely on luck to find prey? Jenna found the boy's instructions rather reminiscent of Ciel's "charlatan temperament."

As for how to acquire the person's belongings, there seemed to be only one solution: through combat; she was to subdue the other party!

Jenna knew the boy was likely a formidable Beyonder aligned with her cause, and without hesitation, she agreed, "Got it."

The boy smiled.

“When you obtain those items and hand them over to me, I’ll pay you the lucky gold coin as a reward.”

“How should I address you? And where should I find you when the time comes?” Jenna, aware that he wasn’t an ordinary boy, couldn’t help but speak in a respectful tone.

The boy mumbled, “You can call me Will. Talking to me like that makes me sound like an adult. I’m just in elementary school!

“When the time comes, you’ll naturally encounter me.”

Will waved her off and said, “You may leave.”

However, after walking for more than ten meters, her curiosity got the best of her, and she turned to glance at the iron-black gas street lamp pole.

The strange boy, Will, had vanished from his spot.

Jenna took a closer look and realized that he had entered the nearby café and was now seated at a booth by the window, where an attendant had just brought him a cup with three scoops of ice cream.

He’s truly just a child… Jenna mused, her curiosity satisfied as she continued on her way.

…

In the financial district, within the Trier Arts Center,

Lumian took out the brown Mystery Prying Glasses once again after having surmised something.

With no hesitation or fear, he donned the mystical item.

The exhibition hall had been his main focus, with the washroom separated by a long corridor.

Amidst the familiar dizziness, the oil painting in front of Lumian underwent a peculiar transformation.

The faces adorning the naked woman’s body turned to look at him.

Simultaneously, Lumian sensed the presence of a creature on the rooftop, where the overlapping sky was, staring at him from a distance. It appeared to be trying to navigate the obstacles and approach him rapidly.

As the blurry face of the woman in the oil painting gradually clarified, her true identity became apparent: brown eyes darting, brown hair cascading, a plump, smooth-skinned face, and an air of detachment…

Lumian recognized her. She was none other than Miss Séraphine, the former tenant of Auberge du Coq Doré, the human model, and the lover playwright Gabriel had been searching for!

As Séraphine's face became clearer, Lumian's surroundings darkened, as if faces were on the verge of emerging from the painting or the void.

Quickly, he removed the Mystery Prying Glasses from his nose bridge, and all the anomalies vanished in an instant, leaving only the sensation of raised hair on his skin.

As expected, the human model for this oil painting is Séraphine…

Although Gabriel is an ordinary person and doesn't possess the Mystery Prying Glasses, he once slept with Séraphine and knows her physical characteristics. That must have been how he noticed traces of his lover when he entered and exited the washroom…

Could it be that Séraphine possesses multiple faces on her body, appearing both painted and alive, just like this oil painting?

Wasn't Gabriel afraid back then?

After discovering the oil painting with Séraphine as the model here, he encountered that normally difficult-to-see creature when he returned?

The timing matches up—the water glass on his desk was more than a day old, and he visited the art exhibition two days ago… Something must have transpired late at night.

As Lumian's thoughts raced, he turned his attention to the oil painting's signature —Claude Pierre August.

The painter was not widely recognized; otherwise, his artwork would not have been hung along the corridor to the washroom. Furthermore, his work was perhaps added for the "Future Impressions" exhibition.

Likewise, he believed that since something had happened to Gabriel, Pierre might have gone missing. He had even gone to the "Hostel" when Séraphine moved out of Auberge du Coq Doré.

Regardless, I should inform Madam Magician. What if there are any clues left behind? Otherwise, they wouldn't have dealt with an ordinary person like Gabriel. Lumian had no intention of pursuing Claude Pierre August himself. This was because it would take a lot of time to gather information about the other party through various channels. And with the target's name and identity, an astromancy

master like Madam Magician should be able to quickly lock onto the painter's residence.

In addition, Gabriel had been attacked late at night after learning about Claude, the painter. Lumian's current information was only a fraction of his own.

Lumian gazed at the oil painting, his lips curling into a smile.

Will I be attacked?

I'm looking forward to it.

…

Around 9 p.m., at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, Apartment 601, Franca, recalling the Demoness Sect's mission, suspected the Iron and Blood Cross Order would soon make a significant move, and her plan was to visit Gardner Martin while digesting the Pleasure potion along the way.

Rather than her usual method of knocking on the door and entering, Franca decided to take a more covert approach.

She intended to hide around 11 Rue des Fontaines, in the garden, or on the lawn, observing discreetly before finding Gardner Martin.

Recognizing Gardner's Sequence and abilities, she returned to her bedroom and retrieved a palm-sized Primordial Demoness statue, which she concealed in a pocket.

This would enhance her ability to remain hidden and reduce the chances of Beyonder powers detecting her.

"I'm heading to Gardner's." Franca waved at Jenna, opened the door, and left Apartment 601.

Jenna acknowledged and breathed a sigh of relief.

She was about to leave and was a little nervous.

Franca arrived at Rue des Fontaines via a rental carriage but chose not to have the driver stop at Building 11 as usual. Instead, she disembarked from a distance and swiftly disappeared into the shadows, stealthily making her way to Gardner Martin's residence.

Her familiarity with the surroundings allowed her to find a gap in the guards' patrol, and she nimbly scaled a side wall to silently descend into the garden.

Franca didn't attempt to infiltrate the building directly. Instead, she followed the shadows, circling to the edge of the front lawn. Next to a gas street lamp, she observed the grayish-white three-story villa, still illuminated.

As time passed, Franca remained vigilant, focused on observing the figures appearing at the windows and their activities.

Suddenly, the main door of the villa swung open, and butler Faustino emerged, accompanied by a figure cloaked in black.

The black-cloaked individual was of average height, standing at around 1.75 meters. Their entire form was concealed, making it impossible to discern their appearance or physical attributes.

Who could it be? Gardner Martin's partner, or a key member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order in charge of other regions? Franca wondered.

As the black-cloaked figure exited the iron fence while butler Faustino retreated into the villa, Franca hesitated for only a moment before making a decision.

She realized that unless she ventured inside Gardner Martin's residence thoroughly, she wouldn't obtain valuable information. Her earlier exploration had been open and yielded little. The cloaked individual might provide her with fresh leads leading to unexpected gains.

Franca, who was invisible, touched the Primordial Demoness statue in her hidden pocket and grew confident.

She circled around the lawn's edge and scaled the iron fence, stealthily trailing the mysterious figure in the black cloak.

…

At 10 p.m., Jenna embarked on her journey into Underground Trier, an entrance not far from Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons.

Lacking a carbide lamp, she relied on her Assassin's night vision to navigate in the pitch-black environment. Jenna was determined to commit the path to memory and proceeded deeper into the underground tunnels, trusting her instincts.

As she advanced, the silence around her grew ever more profound.

Jenna exhaled slowly, alleviating the tension and fear in her heart.

Jenna deliberately moved away from the tunnel's center, pressed herself against a rock wall, and continued cautiously.

After an indeterminate amount of time, the sound of running water reached her ears.

She proceeded for another seven to eight meters around a rocky outcrop, where a small river flowed slowly in the dark underground.

Jenna steadied herself, spotting a mottled stone pillar to hide behind, her form merging with the dense shadows.

She refrained from using Invisibility, recognizing her limitations as a Witch—the duration she could maintain her powers was limited, and she had no way of knowing how long it would take for the target to arrive.

In the silent underground, time seemed to stretch, and Jenna's mental stress steadily built up.

At last, the reverberation of footsteps reached her ears.

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Chapter 457 - 457 Unexpected Target

Chapter 457 Unexpected Target

His next objective was to ascertain whether the enigmatic entity that had targeted him from afar, attempting to approach rapidly while he observed Séraphine's oil painting with the Mystery Prying Glasses, would pay him a visit during the night, much like how it had dealt with Gabriel.

He lay on the bed, closed his eyes, and gradually drifted off to sleep.

Lumian had full confidence in Madam Magician. As a Major Arcana card holder in the Tarot Club, she appeared to possess the ability to launch long-range attacks and was skilled at dealing with untouchable and enigmatic creatures.

As his thoughts blurred and he succumbed to slumber, Lumian found himself in a hazy dream, returning to Auberge du Coq Doré. Dim light filtered through the glass windows on each floor of the slightly tilted building. Gabriel, attired in a white shirt, dark jacket, black pants, and strapless leather shoes, sat on the entrance steps.

The playwright's visage was somewhat translucent, and an air of detachment lingered in his eyes.

Upon spotting Lumian, Gabriel stood up abruptly, a conspicuous smile crossing his face.

Lumian halted warily and looked at him.

"What are you doing here?"

Gabriel's smile waned as he spoke urgently,

"Leave Trier immediately! This place is about to become extremely dangerous!"

Lumian frowned and inquired, "What have you discovered?"

Gabriel cast a wary gaze around before responding, "I'm not entirely sure what they're planning, but I do know it will bring destruction to all of Trier."

They… Lumian pressed for more information. "Are you staying at the Hostel? Where is it?"

A hint of confusion appeared on Gabriel's face.

“You need to be like me to enter or gain the approval of the pixies.

“I didn’t know how to find it. I found myself at the door as soon as I arrived.”

As expected, the Hostel is closely related to the Pixies… Did Gabriel rely on the corruption to alter his existence and reach the Hostel like teleportation? Lumian’s thoughts raced as he asked in a deep voice, “Why did you choose to go to the Hostel? Were you coerced into it?”

“No,” Gabriel shook his head, his voice softening. “I did it of my own accord. Séraphine came to fetch me personally, and I couldn’t refuse. It’s what I wanted.”

A touch of happiness crossed his face.

“Have you realized that you’ve become a monster?”

He paused a beat before continuing, “My script has already achieved success. I have the reputation and income I desired most. I have no regrets in that regard. All I want now is to be with Séraphine, whether she’s human or a monster.”

Lumian didn’t scold or berate him. Instead, he looked at Gabriel and let out a long sigh. “I understand your feelings and thoughts.”

Gabriel’s face showed gratitude, and he spoke sincerely, “After becoming a monster, I seem to have the ability to see a certain future. That’s why I knew you would come to me. I asked Séraphine to let me stay in the room for two more days to bid you farewell. She agreed. She’s not a pure monster!”

Lumian’s heart stirred, and he spoke in a bewitching tone, “Do you want me to rescue you and Séraphine from the Hostel?”

“Is it possible?” Gabriel’s face contorted, and his eyes revealed a mixture of yearning, as if his body and mind existed in different worlds.

Lumian took a step closer and spoke earnestly, “There is hope, but I need you to tell me all the details.”

Gabriel’s expression shifted between blankness, coldness, excitement, longing, and rejection, each emotion expressed vividly.

In that moment, he extended his hand, his eyes filled with intense fear.

Silently, Gabriel’s form shattered, and the image of Auberge du Coq Doré disintegrated, along with the faint mist.

Lumian’s eyes snapped open, and he found himself gazing at the ceiling of the second-floor bedroom in Salle de Bal Brise.

It had all been a dream, but it had felt incredibly real.

…

Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.

Franca, carrying the Primordial Demoness's statue, followed the black-cloaked man while remaining invisible.

The man appeared to have extensive experience and skill in evading pursuit. He frequently changed direction and even doubled back on his path.

If Franca hadn't relied on her invisibility and the assistance of the Primordial Demoness statue, she would have lost him several times.

Finally, the black-cloaked man came to a stop in front of an entrance to Underground Trier.

He half-turned and examined his palms under the crimson moonlight, leaving Franca perplexed.

What's going on? Is he performing palm-reading on himself? Remaining hidden behind a gas street lamp pole, the invisible Franca observed his actions with curiosity.

After a moment, the man descended the steel staircase and disappeared into the dim entrance.

Franca followed closely behind, venturing deeper into Underground Trier.

Twenty minutes later, the black-cloaked man reached a sealed tunnel.

Franca, standing a few meters away, looked over and saw three lamps embedded in the stone wall.

Three classic oil lamps, one high and two below, each with a flame burning inside.

Franca had been in Trier for a long time and had a good understanding of the situation here. This scene triggered a connection in Franca's mind.

Carbonari!

She recognized this as one of the symbols of the Carbonari, an organization seeking to overthrow the government. Lighting three lamps was symbolic in their ranks—the one above represented the sun, while the other two below symbolized the moon and the stars.

The Iron and Blood Cross Order collaborates with the Carbonari? Franca was both surprised and unsurprised.

From her perspective, the Iron and Blood Cross Order aimed to seize power in Intis itself by toppling the government, but their current focus seemed to be on the

underground and the entrance to Fourth Epoch Trier.

The black-cloaked man swiftly passed through the self-opening stone door, and Franca noticed a thin, ever-changing white fog emanating from inside.

This fog looks familiar. There must be something wrong… Franca hesitated to follow when she felt a slight tremor in her hidden pocket.

Franca reached out and touched it, her expression changing slightly.

The classic silver mirror had trembled slightly—the one connected to the underground mirror world!

Franca remained in her concealed position, watching the stone door slowly close without taking another step forward.

…

Beside the flowing underground river, the figure moved swiftly along the water.

He didn't use lanterns, carbide lamps, or other sources of light, yet he moved through the darkness with ease, navigating around potholes, rocks, and obstacles effortlessly.

Jenna, hidden behind a mottled stone pillar, noticed a flickering red light in the target's eye.

Taking a deep breath, she retrieved the ancient Arrow of the Bloodthirsty from her black coat and prepared herself for the confrontation.

Her combat experience wasn't limited, but it wasn't much either. In particular, she had never faced a Beyonder alone. All she could do was use everything in her arsenal to augment herself from the onset. She had to go all out to minimize any accidents.

Jenna plunged the obsidian arrow into her chest, letting it draw her blood and come to live.

Before the figure could approach, she sprinkled fluorescent powder over herself and chanted a Hermes incantation at an almost inaudible volume: "Body Concealment!"

With that, Jenna vanished completely, blending into the darkness, her movements masked by the sound of the underground river.

Moments later, the figure with the red eye arrived in the area. Jenna watched from the shadows.

Suddenly, the darkness came alive beneath the figure's feet, forming inky black chains that wrapped around the legs, waist, and torso.

The figure stopped abruptly, a red light shooting from its eye.

From behind, Jenna's form materialized.

Only then did Jenna get a clear look at her target. He was a man, holding a grayish-white cloth bag and wearing a dark gray robe similar to that of a monk. His face was a menacing sight, constructed with iron plates, gears, springs, screws, cranks, and other mechanical contraptions. There was a vivid red gem embedded in his right eye.

A monk from the Deep Valley Cloister? Jenna's heart raced. She hadn't anticipated Will targeting a monk from the God of Steam and Machinery Church.

She and Franca had crossed paths with similar monks in the Deep Valley Quarry before. These monks had augmented their bodies with mechanical modifications, giving them an eerie appearance.

Confronted with a target whose skull had transformed into metal, Jenna abandoned her initial plan of striking behind the ears. Instead, she concentrated a dark flame in her right palm and pressed it against the mechanical monk's head amidst the howling wind.

Simultaneously, a red beam shot forth, slicing through a few shackles resembling the Abyss. However, it only addressed the front. The other directions were already ensnaring the mechanically enhanced monk.

With a resounding impact, Jenna thrust the black flame into the target's head.

The silent yet menacing black flames expanded instantly, consuming the monk's Spirit Body and setting his spirituality ablaze.

Leveraging the high-speed agility granted by the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty, Jenna continuously shifted her position around the monk to evade counterattacks.

Simultaneously, she sought opportunities to weaken him to the fullest extent with the Demoness's black flames, bolstered by dark, binding spells.

In less than two minutes, the monk, unable to break free, collapsed to the ground, rendered unconscious and weakened.

Jenna exhaled and lowered herself to the ground.

She picked up the grayish-white cloth bag, untied the rope, and inspected its contents.

Inside, she found an array of canned paints and oil paintbrushes.

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Chapter 458 - 458 Same Direction

Chapter 458 Same Direction

Could this monk be a passionate painter?

Or was he simply delivering paint and brushes to an artist?

It seems like a routine task, but the fact that he had chosen the depths of Underground Trier for this errand raises suspicion. It didn't appear to be a matter of time constraints…

Either there's a problem with his destination, or the painter he's looking for is problematic. Perhaps everything is problematic…

A barrage of thoughts raced through Jenna's mind, leading her to suspect a connection between the mechanically enhanced monk and the Hostel they were investigating.

It was possible that an artist with supernatural powers was working on murals underground, requiring a substantial supply of paint and tools!

Jenna decided to search the monk's robe for any clues, finding only a few coins and banknotes.

She placed these items in the same grayish-white cloth bag and secured it with a knot. As she examined the intricate mechanical components that comprised half of the monk's body, she contemplated using the Demoness's black flames to incapacitate him once more. Her plan was to transport him back to the surface for an "interrogation" with the help of Ciel, Franca, and Anthony.

Being a Witch, Jenna had mastered ritualistic magic related to spirit channeling, but she lacked practical experience and was concerned about making a mistake that might disrupt their lead. She also needed a safe prayer target, so she intended to leave this task to the experienced Lumian and Franca.

As Jenna was about to put her plan into action, multiple gears on the unconscious monk's face suddenly began to turn on their own,

producing an unsettling clicking and clacking noise. The mechanical parts came to life,

spinning wildly and devouring the flesh and blood on the other side of the monk's body, turning it into a gruesome mess.

The scene resembled a horrific accident in a factory where an operator had fallen into a massive machine.

Jenna's instincts immediately warned her of impending danger, but before she could react, the mechanical parts, along with her own flesh and blood, lunged towards her.

Amidst the coexisting sounds of cracking and creaking, she transformed into a mirror, shattering inch by inch.

Jenna managed to reappear approximately ten meters away from the underground river.

Without looking back, she swiftly grabbed the grayish-white cloth bag and the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty embedded in her chest. She darted around the rock wall, making a hasty escape to the surface.

Behind her, the sounds of metal grinding and colliding persisted, but they couldn't catch up to her. Gradually, the commotion began to subside.

Finally, Jenna heard the crisp sound of metal parts falling to the ground,

Jenna ran until she reached a named location in Underground Trier, where she finally slowed down and carefully removed the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty from her chest.

If not for that, she might have been caught by the menacing mechanical body before having the opportunity to use the mystical item once more.

As Jenna assessed her surroundings and sought out the underground Avenue du Marché, she reflected on her harrowing experience. It felt as though the chilling tales Franca and Ciel had shared, along with their horrifying abilities, had become a reality.

The parts of the monk's body that had undergone mechanical enhancements had assumed an eerie lifelike state!

And the revived machinery was devouring human flesh and blood!

This is the true nature of the mystical world, where Beyonder powers are accompanied by unimaginable perils… Jenna turned onto the underground Avenue du Marché and made her way towards the stairs that would lead her back to the surface.

Simultaneously, she couldn't shake the suspicion that the enigmatic monk and the sinister secret cave she and Franca had stumbled upon in the Deep Valley Quarry were somehow linked to the impending catastrophe.

…

After the stone door closed, and the dark tunnel fell silent, Franca emerged from her hiding place and remained invisible as she returned to the surface.

She replayed the scene she had just witnessed, trying to pinpoint the source of the familiar feeling emanating from the ever-shifting thin white fog.

Just as she was on the verge of resorting to Magic Mirror Divination or Dream Divination to find answers, a memory resurfaced.

She recalled the moment she and Jenna had eliminated the Deep Valley Cloister's Warlock-dressed man underground. A similar fog had appeared in the mirror during their spirit channeling!

The other party's exploded corpse transformed into a blood mist, revealing the corresponding characteristics, but the colors were different!

007 had informed us that by the time the Purifiers arrived in Deep Valley Town, their target had already shifted. The items on the altar were gone, leaving behind only cryptic words on certain papers…

Those words were Albert Goncourt, Underground, Riot, and Time… Albert Goncourt is one of the leaders of the Carbonari… and this aligns with the three oil lamps I had seen moments ago! Could it be that the Iron and Blood Cross Order is collaborating with the Carbonari to incite a riot, possibly involving monks from the Deep Valley Cloister?

Hiss, could it be that the item Gardner Martin used to smuggle "Rat" Christo into Trier was requested by the Carbonari?

Is it located not far behind that stone door? Is that why my ancient silver mirror reacted?

Franca gradually connected the dots.

She realized the urgency of reporting this matter. Though it wasn't directly related to their primary mission of finding the Hostel, it seemed far from a trivial issue. If it escalated, it could lead to another catastrophe, and Franca felt compelled to do her best to prevent it.

In the next moment, Franca pondered her options.

Should I report to the Tarot Club, the Demoness Sect, or inform the authorities through 007?

She quickly made up her mind.

Only children choose to do multiple-choice questions. Adults select them all!

…

Lumian awoke from his dream, his mind filled with questions as he slowly sat up and surveyed his surroundings.

There were no signs of Madam Magician pursuing Gabriel at the Hostel.

Madam Magician didn't realize that Gabriel had used a dream to warn me to escape Trier immediately? That's impossible. This lady possessed the ability to enter and exit my dreams at will in Cordu, and she is known to be the bane of these special monsters. Even Bouvard's lifeless body, which should have been untouchable, hadn't been spared when she dragged it away… Lumian paced back and forth in the room, pondering the puzzling situation.

He couldn't believe that Madam Magician wasn't paying attention. She had the means to observe from a distance, so there was no urgency in rushing to Salle de Bal Brise.

The insight he gained from Conspirer's influence left Lumian with a nagging sense that the dream was not what it seemed.

To deceive Madam Magician while communicating with him indicated that there was something extraordinary about Gabriel or the Hostel itself!

As Lumian was only a Sequence 6 and lacked extensive knowledge of mysticism, he refrained from speculating and instead sat at his desk, taking up a pen and paper to write a letter.

Knowing the "doll" messenger's preferences, he decided to send the letter only after returning to Auberge du Coq Doré, patiently awaiting a response.

Before long, Madam Magician's reply arrived.

"I didn't notice Gabriel influencing your dream.

"Initial considerations are:

"You have a close connection to the Hostel."

There's a close connection between me and the Hostel? Lumian's forehead twitched as he read the message, feeling as if a bucket of ice-cold water had been poured over his head.

How is that possible?

When did I establish such a bond with the Hostel?

Could it be that Gabriel used this connection to conceal himself from Madam Magician's scrutiny and directly influence my dream?

Lumian found Madam Magician's hypothesis absurd, but he couldn't help but analyze the possibilities.

As Lumian pondered the situation, a sudden realization struck him like a bolt of lightning.

Maipú Meyer!

Susanna Mattise's lover, the ostracized key member of the Bliss Society, the former manager of Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, who had claimed to be returning to the market district to do something!

Could it be that Maipú Meyer had secretly done something in the market district that led to my unexplained close connection with the Hostel?

He wants to prove himself. I'm definitely one of the targets… Was it his plan for me to establish a close connection with the Hostel and detonate it at a critical moment?

How did he do it? I had a close connection to the Hostel without realizing it… Lumian subconsciously glanced at his left chest and suspected that Termiboros, the traitor, might have played a role in this matter.

Otherwise, he wouldn't have failed to notice anything amiss.

Amidst his surprise, Lumian didn't panic. Instead, he felt a sense of joy.

I wonder if I can use my close connection to the Hostel to find that place…

When the time comes, I might have the opportunity to meet the Sansons and have the support of numerous Major Arcana card holders…

Just as Lumian was about to write and inquire about Madam Magician, he heard soft footsteps approaching his room.

Knock, knock, knock. There was a gentle knock on the door of Room 207.

Lumian opened the door and was surprised to find Franca and Jenna standing there.

One of them wore a garish blouse, and the other was dressed as a female mercenary. Their expressions were serious.

Franca felt the need to communicate with Lumian before writing a report. "We've discovered something significant."

You've found something important too? Lumian was taken aback, pointing at the ceiling.

"Call Anthony over as well."

Nearly fifteen minutes later, Franca and Jenna shared their experiences in Room 207 of Auberge du Coq Doré, carefully omitting details about the Demoness Sect

and Will.

As Lumian listened, his brow furrowed.

Some of the Deep Valley Cloister monks are suspected to be linked to the Hostel and the impending catastrophe?

That was an important cloister of the God of Steam and Machinery Church!

Lumian couldn’t help but rub his temples, recollecting that something unusual had also occurred at the Eternal Blazing Sun Church’s Sacred Heart Cloister.

Are the two Churches no longer as reliable?

Could Trier still be saved? Could there be a future?

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Chapter 459 - 459 Price of Bestowment

Chapter 459 Price of Bestowment

“At the very least, those monks at the Deep Valley Cloister are still discreet when they’re up to no good. It means they still have reservations, which suggests that the entirety of the God of Steam and Machinery Church isn’t problematic. A significant number of clergymen, or maybe even the majority, are normal.”

“I think so too,” Anthony Reid agreed, raising his hand and drawing a triangle on his chest.

Lumian continued, “At this point, this is no longer something a small team like ours can handle. It’s best to leave the Deep Valley Cloister’s problem to the Purifiers and the Machinery Hivemind.”

What he didn’t say was that the Tarot Club would keep a close watch. After all, no one knew how many hidden dangers were waiting to emerge within the two Churches. What if someone triggered them prematurely, delaying the investigation of the Deep Valley Cloister?

“Alright,” Franca concurred; it was her original plan to begin with.

With the plan confirmed, Franca and Jenna left Auberge du Coq Doré and returned to Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Lumian drew back the curtains, gazing at the crimson moon in the sky. Casually, he said to Anthony Reid, who was about to leave, “Your best option now is to head to Suhit’s steam locomotive station as soon as you wake up tomorrow and purchase a ticket to leave Trier. The sooner the departing train, the better.”

Anthony, dressed in military-green camouflage, halted in his tracks, slowly turning around, his gaze locked on Lumian’s retreating figure.

“Oh?”

Lumian poured himself a glass of light beer, which served as potable water, and took a sip. He continued to peer out the window and said, “You’ve been with us recently, and you’ve learned a lot. You should be able to discern the looming issue in Trier. The impending catastrophe will be dire. If you don’t depart quickly, you might never get the chance.

“As for seeking revenge, for finding Philip, who faked his death, we can wait until the catastrophe is over. There’s no rule stating you can’t return after leaving Trier.”

Anthony Reid fell into silence for a few seconds before slowly joining Lumian at his side. He too gazed at the night sky and asked, “Why aren’t you leaving?”

Lumian replied with a smirk, “Aren’t you a Spectator? Can’t you see we’re on a mission? How can we just leave Trier like that?”

Anthony turned his head to fix his stare on Lumian’s face and eyes, remaining silent for a long while.

Lumian held the light beer in his hand, his gaze still fixed outside the window. His eyes were vacant, and his focus seemed clouded.

After a while, he scoffed.

“Besides, I have the ability to survive such a disaster. I can protect Franca and Jenna, but only the two of them. Do you think you can compare to beautiful women who have a deeper relationship with me?”

His “protection” referred to teleporting Franca and Jenna to The Fool’s cathedral at the Lavigny Docks.

Anthony didn’t respond and looked at the dark sky outside once more.

Taking a few deep breaths and exhaling white smoke, the Psychiatrist muttered to himself, “I was born and raised on the West Midseashire Coast. It’s an area with many industrial cities, where the God of Steam and Machinery has more believers than the Eternal Blazing Sun.

“When I was fortunate enough to become a Beyonder, my greatest dream was to retire safely from the army with some savings. I’d buy land near my hometown, close to the forest. I’d hire a few people to help me with farming. In my free time, I’d secretly hunt in the forest, breathe the sea air, or go fishing. Heh heh, you might not know this, but the fish in Midseashire are inedible due to heavy industrial pollution. Locals only eat it if they have no other choice.”

Anthony Reid’s voice deepened.

“If I were to return to the West Midseashire Coast and my hometown now, I might never be able to enjoy such a life. It’s not about money; I need a sense of relaxation.

“I still have nightmares about our camp being ambushed, with corpses everywhere. Every time, I can feel my heart racing. I can imagine that if I leave tomorrow and see the news and photos of the Trier catastrophe in the newspapers, I’ll have similar nightmares. I’ll dream of Trier being incinerated by flames, with corpses strewn everywhere.

“That time, I fled out of fear. This time, I don’t want to do that again.”

Anthony Reid took another drag on his cigarette.

Without waiting for Lumian’s mockery, he added, “I’m well aware of my limitations, and all of this doesn’t directly concern me. However, I’ve been in Trier for several years. I know many informants, neighbors, and children who will trade information for sweets or coppet. I don’t want to hear about their deaths in a few days and see their pained faces when I close my eyes.

“I’ll do my best to cooperate with you and do what I can. Only when there’s no other choice will I consider retreating.

“You don’t need to understand. This might be the paranoid decision of a patient with severe psychological problems.”

Lumian chuckled and commented, “You make it sound as if nobody else has psychological problems.”

Before completing my treatment, my psychological problems were far worse than yours!

A smile appeared on Anthony Reid’s face.

“So, you chose to stay too, didn’t you?”

He turned around and left Room 207, puffing on his short cigarette.

Lumian relished the night view of Trier, the enduring cacophony of Rue Anarchie serving as a backdrop to his contemplation. He emptied his glass of light beer.

Then, he took his seat, drew the curtains, and commenced writing to Madam Magician.

“New leads…

“There are now three investigation directions:

“Firstly, the Deep Valley Cloister and the Sacred Heart Cloister.

“Secondly, I can use the strong connection between myself and the Hostel to infiltrate the underground route that Jenna followed when she encountered the monk by the river. By following my instincts, I can attempt to reach the Hostel directly.

“Thirdly, an assault on Gardner Martin. Since the Iron and Blood Cross Order collaborates with the Carbonari, which is linked to the Deep Valley Cloister incident, they might be involved and have valuable information.”

After dispatching the letter, Lumian paced his room, grappling with a mixture of worry, frustration, and anticipation.

“We’ll take responsibility for the first direction. I refrained from mentioning the second direction because it poses a significant risk to you. Furthermore, Gabriel’s warning has likely been detected, so the Hostel will be on high alert against such intrusions.

“We can cautiously explore the third direction, but you must be well-prepared before confronting Gardner Martin.”

Silently, crimson flames erupted, setting the paper in Lumian’s hand ablaze. He planned to get some rest to recover from mental fatigue. At dawn, he would convene with Franca, Jenna, and Anthony to discuss their plan of action.

…

Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Franca hadn’t changed into her cotton pajamas; she was still dressed in her daytime attire.

Observing her pacing the room, Jenna asked, her brow furrowed in confusion, “What’s bothering you?”

Franca sighed and replied, “I intend to seek out Gardner now. Although Ciel didn’t mention it just now, I can sense that he will propose dealing with Gardner in the next two days. This is a clear breakthrough. Sigh, I must seize the opportunity to digest more Pleasure.”

Jenna regarded Franca’s profile, pursing her lips before changing the topic.

“Don’t you have many lovers? Even without Gardner Martin, there are others.”

Franca couldn’t help but clear her throat and smile wryly.

“Long gone, long gone. Gardner and his lovers are my current interests.”

Jenna chuckled and playfully teased, “Without Gardner Martin, you can turn to Ciel.”

“No, no!” Franca waved her hand vigorously. “I can’t get past myself.”

With those words, she headed toward the door.

“I’m going to Rue des Fontaines.”

Jenna’s smile faded as she offered a solemn reminder, “Don’t display any unusual behavior later.”

“I understand,” Franca replied, her expression turning serious. “I won’t let Gardner feel like I’m giving him hospice.”

With that, she opened the door and exited.

Jenna let out a soft sigh as she watched Franca vanish behind the closed door.

Then, her gaze turned to the grayish-white cloth bag on the coffee table, and she muttered to herself, I wonder when I’ll encounter Will to deliver this bag…

…

In the middle of the night, Jenna awoke suddenly from a vivid dream.

In her dream, she found herself in an underground quarry cave, with Will standing before her.

Although it was only a dream, Jenna had an uncanny sense of familiarity with the location and knew how to reach it in reality.

Understanding the significance of her dream, Jenna nodded slowly and changed into her female mercenary attire. Carrying the grayish-white cloth bag, she left Apartment 601 and ventured underground through the entrance on Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Following the revelations of her dream and guided by her spirituality, she descended, turned, and squeezed through gaps at times. Finally, she arrived at the quarry cave she had seen in her dream.

In the center of the mine, Will, dressed as he had been during the day, held an orange jack-o’-lantern. He didn’t appear particularly pleased, resembling a student caught playing hooky by parents and teachers.

“Is this what you want?” Jenna handed him the grayish-white cloth bag filled with various paints and brushes.

Will accepted it but didn’t open the bag. Instead, he retrieved an item known as the lucky gold coin and sighed.

“This is your reward.

“This is both your luck and misfortune. It signifies that you will encounter many things and bear significant responsibility.

“You may not fully grasp it now, but one day, you will.”

Ever since the heretics brought catastrophe to the market district, there’s been no turning back for me… Only by forging ahead in this perilous world of mysticism can I protect those I care about… Jenna silently mused, taking the Loen gold pound. She inspected it and inquired, “How should I use it?”

“Simply keep it with you,” Will advised, waving his hand before vanishing into the depths of the quarry cave, clutching his jack-o’-lantern.

Jenna stowed the lucky gold coin and made her way back to the surface. To her astonishment, she found that she couldn’t recall the route she had taken.

While she had arrived guided by her spirituality, she was now fully awake and devoid of the same guidance.

Jenna had no choice but to navigate her way independently, following a general principle of “ascending.”

After walking for some time, the ground suddenly shook violently, as if an explosion had occurred in the distance.

An earthquake or some other anomaly? Jenna furrowed her brow and quickened her pace to find a path leading upward.

As she turned a corner around a rock wall, her feet abruptly gave way.

The ground had already caved in, and now, it had completely collapsed.

Amidst the deafening sounds of collapse, Jenna couldn’t react in time and tumbled deeper as the ground disintegrated.

She swiftly adjusted her body and activated her Assassin abilities, allowing her to descend gracefully like a feather.

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Chapter 460 - 460 Chain Reaction

Chapter 460 Chain Reaction

After the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery lost all its dioceses in the Loen Kingdom, the former Archbishop of Backlund, a member of the Divine Council, returned to the headquarters in Intis. Over the past few years, he had traveled to various places like a firefighter, handling various serious Beyonder incidents.

He understood better than most clergymen of the God of Steam and Machinery Church that, despite the outward appearance of peace, the world was riddled with festering wounds. Problems abounded, and hidden dangers lurked in the darkness. The orthodox Churches and government organizations could only strive to maintain stability.

Horamick collected his thoughts and sighed silently. He turned to the Machinery Hivemind deacon beside him and declared, “Let’s take action. God will protect us. By steam!”

As he spoke, he drew a Triangular Sacred Emblem on his chest.

The burly Machinery Hivemind deacon issued the command for purification, and the members of the Hivemind sprang into action. Some raised iron-black barrel-shaped objects, while others shouldered weapons resembling steam firearms, devoid of backpacks or golden ammunition belts. Still, others produced leather scrolls, charms crafted from various metals, and some pointed rings, canes, and other objects forward.

Rumble!

The miniature sun-like golden fireball was the first to blast out of a cannon barrel, landing at the heart of the quarry cave.

Behind it followed a cascade of colorful “cannonballs” and bullets of varying shapes. The light and dispersed waves purged the entire Deep Valley Quarry repeatedly, maintaining the cave’s structural integrity, resulting in only a slight collapse.

After a few rounds of purification, the concealed cave within the quarry was breached, unveiling its interior.

Horamick’s eyes gleamed with an inhuman, dark-red light. He could clearly discern that the white mist within the secret cave had nearly dissipated entirely. Human arms and legs were embedded in the rock walls on either side.

The archbishop advanced, leading two squads of Machinery Hivemind members through the quarry and into the concealed cave.

Before entering, he cast a glance back at the nearby Deep Valley Cloister, closely monitored by Trier's archbishop with Sealed Artifacts.

Horamick studied the human arms and legs attached to gears, crankshafts, and other mechanical components, resembling experimental subjects.

Under the deacon's orders, the Machinery Hivemind members initiated another round of purification. They persisted until the arms, legs, and machinery had turned to ashes or fragments, allowing them to proceed further into the secret cave and descend the tunnel.

After several iterations, Horamick and the Machinery Hivemind members, their pale-white hair concealed by clergyman bonnets, reached a vast, laboratory-like chamber.

Here, human arms intertwined with machinery, following ceiling tracks, perpetually gripping cabinets, sinks, long tables, and iron boxes, moving them toward the blazing fire at the deepest part of the hall.

A few human corpses were piled in the chamber, and a humanoid figure made entirely of machinery stood among them.

This mechanical being stood at a towering height of over three meters. One of his cybernetic eyes resembled an emerald, while the other resembled a ruby, supported by numerous components. His temples were encased in a transparent special material, revealing the squirming grayish-white brain within.

The mechanical giant cast a glance at Horamick and the others, who were scattered at the entrance of the chamber, and emitted a metallic chuckle.

"Seeing this, you have no reason to doubt, right? We are the chosen children of God. We follow the true teachings of God, while your spirits and flesh have been tainted by the pleasures and indulgence of the mortal world, causing you to abandon the throne of God!"

Turning his attention to the mechanical giant, his benevolent expression remained undisturbed.

"You used a spirituality gem, didn't you?

"Using humans to refine spirituality gems is even more ruthless and wasteful than employing steam to drive them.

"Claude, I thought you were momentarily lost and would gradually return to your senses within the Deep Valley Cloister. I didn't anticipate that you would become a heretic!"

“Heretic?” The mechanical giant laughed. “You are the heretics! When was the last time any of you received a revelation?”

“All the time,” Horamick responded with composure. “Claude, tell me, where is the Hostel? Are you in league with those evil gods to set your sights on Fourth Epoch Trier?”

In his mechanical giant form, Claude’s eyes emitted red and green lights as he spoke with solemnity,

“You have strayed from the teachings of God. You no longer possess the spirit of sacrifice.

“The future of this world and the chance for a deity to ascend to the pinnacle lies within Fourth Epoch Trier. The sooner we unlock it, the greater our hope!”

Without waiting for Horamick’s reply, the mechanical giant declared coldly, “I will show you who the heretics are and who the true followers of God are!”

As soon as Claude finished speaking, the light in his cybernetic eyes flared, and the entire chamber trembled. The sounds of machinery in operation resonated with an enigmatic aura.

In an instant, the Machinery Hivemind members, who had been on the verge of unleashing their firepower, witnessed projected paintings depicting the evolution of humans emerging from obscurity, advancing step by step, and building civilizations at various stages.

These paintings were ethereal, weighty, delicate, and magnificent. Horamick and his companions seemed to transform into the people within the paintings, experiencing the gravity and splendor of civilization.

At that moment, a face appeared “outside the painting.”

This figure wore a towering crown, with his nostrils decayed to the point where only two black holes remained. His eyes were filled with countless overlapping star charts, and they stared greedily at Horamick and the others, as well as their civilization.

Silently, more faces pressed against the surface of the painting. Some had their heads bisected by a ruler, while others were adorned with yellow paper covered in strange symbols. Some were covered in ears of wheat and rice, while others barely took on human forms, their bodies adorned with various symbols.

These faces were larger than Horamick and his companions combined. They stared fixedly at the scene through the painting.

The Machinery Hivemind members who beheld these faces experienced a profound fear from the depths of their hearts, as though their entire civilization would be obliterated.

Just as they were on the verge of losing control, the faces vanished mysteriously, just as they had appeared.

The scene before Horamick's eyes reverted to its normal state. The mechanical giant Claude and the frenziedly operating chamber reentered his field of vision.

The archbishop remained unruffled, though his voice resonated with anger.

"Heretics!"

The sound of gears clicking filled the chamber, illuminating it as brightly as daylight.

The Machinery Hivemind members launched their attacks in succession.

Rumble!

The Deep Valley Quarry experienced a distinct tremor, as though a brief, violent earthquake had struck.

…

In Underground Trier, just outside the stone door through which the Carbonari had disappeared, crimson fireballs hovered in the air, casting a warm glow in the dark tunnel.

Blazing Danitz, dressed in a linen shirt, a brown jacket, dark pants, and black leather boots, had one hand in his pocket as he fixed his gaze on the nearby stone door.

His burnt-yellow hair and eyebrows framed his face, and he casually held a weed in his mouth, surveying the surroundings with his dark-blue yet bright eyes.

Nearly 20 men, all dressed as sailors, silently fanned out in the vicinity. Some twirled daggers, others wiped the barrels of their revolvers, and a few stretched their necks in anticipation.

A grinning, brown-haired sailor finally broke the silence and questioned Blazing Danitz, "Captain, why are we aiding the Intis government in pursuing the Carbonari? And why are we doing it for free?"

Danitz glanced at him, spat out the weed from his mouth, and muttered under his breath, "Damn fools, do you want to see Trier in ruins? Are you lads not still Intisian?"

As he spoke, he swung his fist at the stone door.

Doesn't this group of assholes not know that their captain owns numerous properties in Trier?

Upon the surface of Danitz's clenched fist, blazing white flames gathered as he thrust forward. Eventually, they coalesced into a fireball emitting a destructive aura.

Boom!

The ground shook, and the stone door shattered.

…

Jenna descended gracefully in the seemingly endless darkness, occasionally brushing against gravel but escaping physical harm.

After what felt like an eternity of descent, her feet finally touched solid ground.

Her beautiful blue eyes reflected a building.

It was a slightly crooked beige house. The lower three floors bore the architectural marks of Roselle's era, featuring pillar walls, arches, and large windows. The top two floors, in stark contrast, seemed crudely appended as an afterthought.

This is… Jenna was visibly taken aback.

The building before her was one she recognized all too well.

It was Auberge du Coq Doré!

At that moment, light streamed from numerous rooms within Auberge du Coq Doré. Jenna spotted a man and a woman, standing on the third-floor balcony, wrapped in each other's embrace.

The man sported black-framed glasses, his neatly combed brown hair adding to his refined appearance. As for the woman, she wore a lake-blue dress, her plump face and ethereal brown eyes creating a curious juxtaposition.

Thud, thud. Jenna's heart raced.

She had never actually met the woman, but she was familiar with the man.

It was the missing playwright, Gabriel!

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Chapter 461 - 461 Strange World

Chapter 461 Strange World

Only then did Jenna, who appeared to be lost in a daydream, snap back to reality. Instinctively, she took two steps back and melted into the shadows cast by the building.

As her thoughts raced, chaos reigned in her mind.

Is that Gabriel?

I'm seeing him again… Didn't he morph into a monster and head to the Hostel?

Is this the Hostel? Auberge du Coq Doré is the Hostel?

No, the real Auberge du Coq Doré definitely isn't a Hostel. Otherwise, Ciel and the secret organization with tarot cards as their code names would have discovered it long ago…

Is this a mirror image of Auberge du Coq Doré, or is it the sketch of someone somewhere?

Jenna quickly deduced, relying on the information at hand.

Yet, upon further reflection, she sensed that something was off.

Auberge du Coq Doré used a naming system like Room 207 and 305. According to Bouvard's prophecy, Voisin Sanson was in Room 7, and Pualis de Roquefort was in Room 12. They didn't match up.

There must be something awry!

Jenna averted her gaze from the counterfeit Auberge du Coq Doré and surveyed her surroundings.

She noticed that this place was identical to Rue Anarchie. The buildings lined up perfectly, some tall, some short, some askew, and some precariously balanced, but all standing firm.

On the street, vendors peddled meatloaf, Whiskey Sours, and other wares. Pedestrians streamed in and out, creating a bustling scene.

If she hadn't spotted Gabriel and had been plummeting this entire time, Jenna would have believed she'd returned to the surface and Rue Anarchie.

As Jenna carefully observed the pedestrians and vendors, it became clear that something was off.

Their vacant expressions and infrequent changes gave them an eerie, mechanical quality. Many familiar faces seemed to vanish at the end of the street, only to reappear, circling around from somewhere and returning to the entrance of Rue Anarchie in a repetitive cycle.

It's indeed fake… like a massive stage production. Most people, like the surrounding buildings, serve as a backdrop, but it's just a backdrop… Jenna analyzed the scene, drawing parallels with theatrical performances she knew well, trying to make sense of what she was witnessing.

Her attention then shifted to the counterfeit Auberge du Coq Doré and Room 207.

After a few moments of contemplation, Jenna decided not to risk infiltrating the fake Auberge du Coq Doré. She opted to explore the area carefully, gaining a rough understanding of the overall situation to see if there was a way out.

The layout and situation here mirrored Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman. Jenna barely needed to distinguish the path before returning to Rue des Blouses Blanches.

With every step, her sense of unease grew. She even began to question if her usual neighborhood was real.

Jenna couldn't help but look up at the sky from the shadows.

Blue sky, white clouds, the westering sun, and billowing smoke.

It all felt real, yet helped Jenna confirm that this wasn't the genuine market district.

She had descended into the underground in the middle of the night to search for Will. Could she have been missing for twelve hours?

From across 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, Jenna surveyed Apartment 601.

Beside the glass window in the living room, she saw Franca, dressed in a blouse and holding a bottle of dark red wine in her hand. Her flaxen hair was tied in a ponytail.

Behind Franca, Jenna, dressed in a light-blue dress, busied herself with tidying up, occasionally disappearing from the window's view.

Jenna wasn't shocked, but her heart sank.

She and Franca were undeniably present!

Is this really the reflection of the market district?

Jenna closely observed Franca and confirmed that Franca still used her right hand, ruling out the possibility of her being a mirror person.

Likewise, in Apartment 601, both Franca and Jenna's vacant expressions persisted as they continued their lives following predetermined paths without any deviations.

While remaining hidden in the shadows, Jenna pondered the location of the exit.

Lacking much experience, she sought inspiration from Lumian's accounts and the plays she had witnessed.

Should I head to the border and investigate the edge of this fake world?

Since this place faithfully replicates the market district, well, at least Rue Anarchie and Rue des Blouses Blanches, it resembles a reflection. Could I find the exit by locating distinct places?

The Church has always told us that we can seek refuge in the cathedral in times of danger or accidents… I wonder what église Saint-Robert looks like here. Does it seek God's protection or adhere to the Black Sun? If it's truly the Black Sun, it's an entirely different realm…

Jenna decided to stealthily make her way to Avenue du Marché and observe the state of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church's église Saint-Robert in this strange world.

She made sure not to expose herself to passersby, residents on both sides, or newsboys peddling their wares. Through the various shadows, she carefully and quietly turned onto Avenue du Marché.

After advancing a distance, Jenna's eyes suddenly froze.

There was no sign of Salle de Bal Brise on Avenue du Marché!

Where the khaki-colored building and the skull statue should have been, there was only impenetrable darkness. Even the sunlight from the sky couldn't pierce it.

In this dark black hole-like scene, bright red lines alternated between slowly materializing and being consumed by the surroundings. Their ultimate destination remained a mystery.

What's most peculiar about this place is Salle de Bal Brise? Ciel mentioned that there's something ancient and sinister beneath Salle de Bal Brise… Jenna stared into the darkness, sensing that this might be the heart of the problem.

Muttering to herself, Jenna contemplated, Will I be able to leave this strange world by walking into that darkness? But I have a hunch that not only does it not lead to safety, but it also represents danger. I can't enter rashly…

As these thoughts raced through Jenna's mind, she was suddenly jolted by a commotion.

Swiftly, she cast her gaze towards the other end of Avenue du Marché, where she spotted several indistinct figures hovering in the air, emitting a faint glow as they meticulously scrutinized every shadow and conceivable hiding spot for humans.

They clutched a stack of papers, which they compared to the pedestrians on the road.

Jenna's heart tightened as a thought crossed her mind.

Did the masters or guards of this world discover the collapsing tunnel above and suspect that outsiders had entered, prompting them to launch a thorough search?

Uncertain about the abilities of these blurry figures emitting a faint light, Jenna didn't dare risk assuming they couldn't spot her lurking in the shadows. Her only option was to swiftly retrace her steps and return to Rue des Blouses Blanches, planning to take a detour through an area that had already been inspected.

Yet, even on the other side of Rue des Blouses Blanches, faintly-lit figures were conducting inspections.

Jenna's heart raced, and amidst her unease, she had a sudden idea.

She slipped into a nearby building, scattered dust in an inconspicuous corner, and recited an incantation to become invisible.

With this newfound invisibility, she dashed along the street's shadows and infiltrated Apartment 601 before the floating figures could search 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

After patiently waiting for several moments, Jenna discreetly followed the imposter Jenna into the washroom.

Seizing the moment while the impostor was occupied with washing a piece of cloth, Jenna, still in her invisibility state, drew a dagger and executed an Assassin's Mighty Blow.

Her form materialized as her dagger found its mark in the impostor Jenna's back.

The fake Jenna's eyes bulged in shock, but Jenna swiftly covered her mouth and nose to stifle any outcry.

After a brief struggle, the imposter met her end.

Rather than withdrawing her dagger, Jenna chose to change into the fake Jenna's clothes. Her extensive experience with worn-out clothes helped her conceal the hole at the back.

She then concealed the impostor's body in the cupboard beneath the sink to prevent any blood from flowing.

With this done, Jenna wrangled up the cloth and mimicked the actions she had observed, maintaining the vacant expression.

Soon, a faint figure floated outside Apartment 601's window.

Jenna didn't look up, continuing to tidy the coffee table, which had already been devoid of miscellaneous items. She could sense two substantial gazes on her, accompanied by the sound of paper being flipped.

After an agonizing seven to eight seconds, the faint figures moved on to search the next apartment.

Jenna let out a relieved breath and proceeded to the washroom with a measured pace.

After what had just transpired, she felt an urgency to seek help. She couldn't afford to wait any longer. Even the suspected exit seemed too dangerous to approach, and numerous figures emitting a faint light were "patrolling" the area.

While these figures didn't appear overly formidable, Jenna knew that engaging them would undoubtedly draw the attention of the administrators of this world.

If this place was indeed the Hostel, the previous residents, granted boons by evil gods, would pose a significant threat. This included Madame Night Pualis, who alternated between a demigod and a Sequence 5, or the true demigod, Circle Inhabitant Voisin Sanson.

Jenna hadn't reached out to the outside world for help from the beginning because she lacked the means to send a message without leaving this place. Now, she was left with no other choice but to attempt something.

I wonder if the telegraph office here can be of any use… It doesn't seem promising… Uh… perhaps I should offer a prayer to a deity and recite His honorific name in Hermes. I hope He can hear my plea…

Jenna's heart raced as she seized the opportunity to clean the cloth in the washroom. She outstretched her arms and began reciting the honorific name of the Eternal Blazing Sun.

"The mighty Eternal Blazing Sun, Inextinguishable Light, Embodiment of Order, God of Deeds…"

As the soft Hermes words reverberated, Jenna's surroundings remained unchanged.

She couldn't help but regret not having made up her mind after becoming a Witch and putting her faith in Mr. Fool. That way, she might have obtained The Fool's

honorific name from Lumian. But now, it was too late to consider that option.

Phew… Jenna let out a sigh and retrieved the lucky gold coin from a hidden pocket in her light-blue dress.

She felt that her best option was to rely on luck for now. She wanted to see if luck alone could help her elicit a response without using a complete honorific name.

Holding the lucky gold coin, Jenna continued her prayer in Hermes, “Great Mr. Fool, please help me leave this place. Please protect Trier…”

…

In the market district, Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 207.

Lumian suddenly awoke, sensing a faint warmth in his left chest.

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Chapter 462 - 462 Critical Interference

Chapter 462 Critical Interference

What happened? Mr. Fool's seal has been activated… Did Termiboros attempt to escape? Lumian's thoughts raced. However, as he pondered, he began to sense that something was amiss.

Sunlight filtered through the drawn curtains, casting a semi-darkness over Room 207.

At first glance, there was nothing unusual, as if someone had overslept until the sun was high in the sky.

But Lumian was different. He reset his body and mental state every morning, waking up naturally at 6 a.m. It was already autumn, and Trier didn't see the first light until 7 a.m.

Lumian recalled an earthquake that had occurred not long ago, and he suspected that the official Beyonders might have taken action. However, after carefully listening to his surroundings and confirming the safety of the market district, he had gone back to sleep.

It was still late at night!

Either Termiboros has escaped, and I'm no longer affected by the Circle Inhabitant's power, or there's been an anomaly in the market district… Lumian shrank into a gentle crouch, leaning against the desk beside the bed. He cautiously raised a corner of the curtain.

What he saw was a familiar daily scene, but soon, Lumian noticed blurry figures floating in the air, emitting a faint, eerie glow.

These figures had different faces, but they all shared an unsettling stiffness, emptiness, coldness, and detachment. They bore a certain resemblance to the corrupted Bouvard's corpse and Gabriel, who had transformed into a monster. It was as if they could disappear into the crevices of space at any moment, gazing coldly and dispassionately at reality.

The monsters of the Hostel pathway have invaded Trier? But where are Trier's protective powers? This doesn't feel very strong; it's more like a product of corruption… He observed carefully and noticed that the street vendors and pedestrians also appeared somewhat empty, as if they too had been affected.

Combined with the anomaly in time and the westering sun, Lumian quickly surmised the situation.

I'm not in the real market district!

I've been drawn into a strange world suspected to be the Hostel. This is the reason why Mr. Fool's seal was activated!

Lumian released his right hand's grip, allowing the curtains to gently fall back against the wall, sealing off the interior from the exterior once more.

With a sense of purpose, he got out of bed and checked his belongings to ensure they were all intact.

Without wasting any time, Lumian set up the altar and erected a wall of spirituality, readying himself to perform ritualistic magic to seek Mr. Fool's assistance.

One by one, he used his spirituality to light the three candles and incinerate the herbal powder and essential oil. Stepping back twice, he began to solemnly recite The Fool's honorific name.

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck.

"I implore you…"

Lumian's thoughts slowed down once more, and an uncomfortable sensation coursed through his flesh. It was as if an army of countless worms were wriggling beneath his skin.

This malevolence would briefly fade, only to surge back. It didn't fully dissipate, nor did it manifest into tangible reality.

The cycle of vanishing and resurfacing was akin to a monstrous entity in the water extending its tentacles to the shore, only to be pulled back into the deep sea by an unseen force.

Lumian struggled to complete the ritual, waiting in vain for the angel's protection or any revelations to come.

The influence of the gray fog intensified, leaving him with no choice but to prematurely end the ritual and extinguish the candle flames.

As the wall of spirituality disintegrated, Lumian's thoughts finally returned to their normal pace.

Sometimes malice, sometimes no issues… Is The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings interfering with Mr. Fool's response?

He usually can’t do it. Has He gathered enough strength to take a risk at a critical moment?

This implies that the situation has reached a critical turning point…

…

In Quartier éraste, outside the Sacred Heart Cloister with its numerous golden steeples, the Major Arcana card holders, Magician—clad in a white knotted shirt and a beige dress—and the elegant and pristine Justice, stared at the magnificent building.

A golden retriever accompanied them, doing the same as well.

Rumble. The ground quaked, as if a brief earthquake had struck Trier.

Magician smiled and said, “It’s beginning.”

They understood that this commotion was likely stemming from the Deep Valley Cloister and the quarry. Their aim was to initiate a series of changes and set off a chain reaction, with the hope that Lady Moon, hidden within the Sacred Heart Cloister, would step out on her own and trigger their plan ahead of schedule.

By doing so, they could avoid forcefully entering the Sacred Heart Cloister and provoking the Eternal Blazing Sun Church. Their target was Lady Moon, the evil god’s bestowed who nurtured a deity.

Assuming there were very few Angel-level heretics Blessed within the barrier, Lady Moon represented the Great Mother and the most potent power among all of Trier’s heretics. It was highly likely that she was at the center of the problem. By controlling her, they could disregard the intricate web woven by fate and grasp the heart of the issue, possibly resolving it on the spot.

If Lady Moon didn’t emerge, Magician intended to capitalize on the chaos in Trier, attempting to conceal the grand complex of buildings blessed by the Eternal Blazing Sun, and forcibly locate her target.

Justice nodded gently.

“In fact, I’ve always had a sense that something is amiss with Lady Moon. The problem may not be what we’ve suspected and might have lured us here.

“However, regardless of the situation, we have many dependable companions. Even if something occurs elsewhere, I believe they can handle it.”

Magician concurred tersely.

“The two of us can’t do everything. Believing in our companions is both hopeful and necessary.”

Justice asked calmly, “What’s the matter?”

Magician frowned and replied, “The seal experienced a fluctuation… Mr. Fool has also sent a revelation, but I’m not certain if it’s authentic…”

…

After tidying up the altar, Lumian was just about to settle down and consider the current situation and ways to contact the outside world when he heard two sets of footsteps approaching from upstairs.

Are they heading for Room 207? Had the dissolution of the wall of spirituality alerted someone here? Lumian surveyed the area, his fingers finding the gaps in the newspaper-covered wall as he climbed up to the ceiling.

Like a colossal spider, he relied on a Dancer’s flexibility and a Hunter’s physique to silently cling closely to the wall, waiting for the two people in the corridor to approach.

If they didn’t spot anything unusual, he would consider it a successful deception and let them pass. If they sensed anything was amiss, he would strike without hesitation.

At that moment, Lumian felt a deep sense of gratitude for Auberge du Coq Doré’s aged appearance. It was filled with damage and signs of repair. This was why he could grasp certain protrusions, secure his grip in certain crevices, and anchor his body safely to the ceiling.

In just over ten seconds, the door to Room 207 creaked open.

Lumian’s eyes focused on Gabriel’s hairline and forehead, as well as the black-framed glasses perched on the bridge of his nose.

Behind the playwright stood Séraphine, a model clad in a lake-blue dress, exuding an aura of detachment.

It’s indeed the Hostel… Although Lumian couldn’t fathom why he had inexplicably ended up at the Hostel, he still felt a surge of excitement despite his taut nerves.

From this point onward, as long as he could deceive Séraphine and the others, establish a connection with the outside world, and seek help, there was hope for resolving the problem!

Gabriel took two steps inside and halted. He scanned the room and said to Séraphine, “No issues here.”

Séraphine tersely acknowledged his words and proceeded to inspect the other rooms.

Gabriel followed the model closely, making sure to close the door of Room 207 behind him.

After they ascended from the second floor, Lumian released his grip on the ceiling and gently landed on the floor.

He pulled up a chair, turned it around, and sat down, leaning back as he kept his gaze locked on the door.

After a few minutes, footsteps approached from the third floor.

Lumian remained motionless, unsurprised as he watched the wooden door gently open.

Gabriel's figure appeared.

"Why did you come in?" the playwright, now a monster with a slightly vacant expression, asked with a note of rational concern.

Lumian chuckled.

"I'd like to know that too."

Gabriel entered the room quietly, shutting the door behind him.

He was dressed in a white shirt, a dark jacket, black pants, and strapless leather shoes, his face showing signs of pain.

"Leave this place as soon as possible. I'm losing control. I don't know when I'll betray you. By the way, Jenna has also entered. I don't know where she's hiding."

Jenna is here too? Lumian raised his eyebrows and asked the most critical question, "How do I leave?"

Gabriel began to respond, but the door to Room 207 creaked open once more.

Only then did Lumian sense the intrusion and turned his gaze towards the door.

Séraphine stood there, with her plump face, naturally disheveled brown hair, and brown eyes exuding a unique ethereal aura.

Lumian didn't panic. He put on a calm demeanor and said, "You seem to know Gabriel so well."

Despite his outward composure, every muscle in his body tensed.

"He's not good at hiding his thoughts," Séraphine replied in an empty voice.

Communicable… Lumian suppressed his urge to use the Spell of Harrumph and sighed.

“I thought you had already become a pure monster.”

Séraphine’s lips formed a self-deprecating smile.

“The difference between me and them is that before I turned into a pure monster, I realized there was still someone who truly loved me.”

Gabriel smiled.

Lumian sighed and inquired, “Is this the Hostel?”

“Yes,” Gabriel confirmed before anyone else could.

Lumian glanced at the dimly lit corridor.

“But the room here isn’t Room 7, Room 12. It’s still Room 207, 309.”

Séraphine gazed at Lumian, her expression becoming increasingly ethereal, and her voice even more illusory.

“Here, they call me: Room 12.”

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Chapter 463 - 463 Noncorresponding Details

Chapter 463 Noncorresponding Details

He had considered various possibilities, but he hadn't guessed what Room 12 signified.

Room 12 was where Madame Night Pualis de Roquefort, her husband, butler, lady's maid, and the children resided!

Almost simultaneously, Lumian recalled the oil painting he had seen at Trier's art center. The woman in the painting, modeled after Séraphine, was naked, her skin adorned with faces.

Were those faces the symbols of the room's occupants, or were they the manifestations of the Hostel itself? Lumian's pupils dilated as he fixed his gaze on Séraphine, prepared to activate the black mark on his body at any moment and use the Spell of Harrumph to block the exit of Room 12's occupants.

He was still haunted by the memories of Madame Pualis.

Séraphine tugged at her lake-blue dress, her plump face contorting with obvious pain.

"I can't influence how long the residents inside can sense the outside world…"

In other words, Madame Pualis hasn't discovered me yet… Lumian heaved a sigh of relief, but he didn't dare to be careless. What if Séraphine's interference quickly failed?

At that moment, Séraphine pulled down the collar of her dress, revealing a portion of her skin.

Lumian could clearly see the oil painting-like faces there. They were half-hidden and half-exposed, looking exceptionally terrifying.

This confirmed Lumian's guess and piqued his curiosity.

Why use a corrupted human model as a room in the Hostel? Why allow Madame Pualis, Voisin Sanson, and other powerful evil god-bestowed individuals to stay there? Couldn't they just move into this replica—the fake Auberge du Coq Doré?

Was this to interfere with divination, prophecy, and other mysticism methods employed during a search?

Why does it feel like a ritual? It's like a specific setup and requirement… As an Alms Monk with ample knowledge of ritualistic magic, Lumian sensed something sinister about this matter.

Seeing that Séraphine hadn't left, he seized the opportunity to inquire, "How many rooms does the Hostel have?"

"From Room 2 to Room 13," Séraphine replied in her ethereal voice.

"No Room 1?" Lumian asked immediately.

Gabriel answered for his lover. "There's supposed to be one, but we've never seen it. Room 1 has never moved into the Hostel."

Mysterious Room 1… It's confirmed at the moment that there are 12 rooms, but there might be more than one evil god bestowed living in each room… Lumian realized that time was of the essence and quickly changed his line of questioning.

"How can I escape from here?"

"With the permission of the pixies or through the black hole on Avenue du Marché, but it's very dangerous. It might lead you to places you shouldn't be," Séraphine replied, her eyes shifting between emptiness and pain.

Avenue du Marché's black hole… Lumian inquired further, "How many pixies are there, and where can I find them?"

"Three," Gabriel responded. "They don't reside in this world and only visit occasionally. They typically allow the servants to maintain order here—they are the flying and glowing figures you see outside."

Three pixies… According to the Purifiers' information, the Sequence of a Pixie likely hasn't reached godhood. I can tentatively consider them equivalent to Sequence 5, but their unique states mean that unless they actively enter reality, some Saints might not even be able to attack them… I do have the potential to deal with the pixies when encountering them, especially if I could capture one to facilitate my escape… Lumian's thoughts raced as he asked further, "Do the pixies have a regular pattern of entering and exiting?"

"No…" Séraphine replied, her demeanor gradually fading as she shook her head slowly.

Lumian switched to another line of questioning, "Do you know where Jenna is hiding?"

"I don't know," Gabriel replied quickly. "The pixies' servants haven't located her either. They're uncertain if anyone has truly entered this place. The pixies must

have ordered an investigation based on the changes in the outside world out of caution."

Before Lumian could ask another question, Séraphine's face twisted once again.

She turned and left Room 207, heading upstairs.

It was evident that her ability to influence the residents' perception of the outside world was quickly fading.

Gabriel's condition worsened as he slowly made his way to the corridor outside.

"Is there a boundary here?" Lumian inquired one last time.

Gabriel nodded, his eyes growing increasingly vacant.

"Only Avenue du Marché and the area around it are real.

"It's surrounded by a dark, deep void with a formless barrier."

Barrier… Lumian repeated this word in his heart, his expression unchanged as he watched Gabriel close the door for him and listened to his footsteps returning to the third floor.

The word "barrier" brought to mind something Madam Magician had mentioned before.

She had spoken of a barrier outside their world, preventing the invasion of alien evil gods.

Although Gabriel's description of the barrier might not be the same as Madam Magician's, Lumian couldn't ignore the possibility that these barriers were connected, especially given the evil god believers' grand plans.

Turning away from the door, Lumian realized that time was of the essence.

Séraphine and Gabriel's corruption would only worsen, rendering them increasingly out of control. Once fully mutated, they would no longer help Lumian and Jenna hide the truth, likely reporting it to the pixies.

There are two pressing issues at hand. First, how to contact the outside world or escape this place. Second, finding Jenna. Lumian focused and employed his Conspirer thinking abilities.

Regarding the first question, especially how to contact the outside world, he quickly brainstormed several potential solutions:

1. Fully activate the Blood Emperor's aura in his right hand to see if it could break through the barriers of this abnormal world, attracting the attention of the demigods in Trier.

2. Set up a boon-seeking ritual to bypass The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings's interference and transmit information to Mr. Fool.

3. Test the spirit and flesh connection between himself and Mr. K's finger.

4. Attempt to summon Madam Magician's messenger.

5. Attempt to summon Madame Hela's messenger.

6. Recite the incantation used to enter the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society's gathering—the Nation of the Evernight palace—to see if it could be of use in this situation without any prior request.

7. Find the fake Franca in this world and check if she possesses the ancient silver mirror they had obtained from underground to potentially use it to escape.

8. Create a commotion to attract one or two pixies and capture them.

9. …

Before diving into any of his numerous plans, Lumian knew that locating Jenna was a top priority, as any of his actions could potentially alert the pixies and draw their attention.

How should I find Jenna? He tried to put himself in Jenna's shoes, considering how she, an experienced Witch, would handle being in this strange world, suspected to be the Hostel's location.

Jenna must have also seen Gabriel, and she wouldn't take the risk of entering the fake Auberge du Coq Doré immediately.

She can become invisible and hide in the shadows. She usually has the patience to observe. It's not difficult for her to notice the peculiarities of pedestrians and vendors…

Under these circumstances, what should I do if I were her?

Yes, I'd search for the boundaries of this place… I'd see if cathedrals and other deity-protected buildings have been replicated. If they have, I'd investigate what's inside and whom they believe in… I'd identify the differences between this place and the real market district to find any clues for my escape… And my first task will be to confirm if there's a fake me.

The pixies' servants were conducting a search…

Lumian's thoughts gradually cleared. He returned to the desk, drew the curtains slightly, and peered outside.

Lumian waited until the ethereal pixie servants, blurry figures emitting a faint glow and wearing blank expressions, had finished their investigation and

disappeared before he took out the silver Lie earring and placed it on his left ear.

Swiftly, he transformed into Madame Fels and descended to the first floor, as though inspecting every room.

Then, he became a vendor who didn't sell his wares nearby, passing by Madame Fels and leaving Auberge du Coq Doré.

This was his home territory. Even though it was a replica or a reflection, it didn't stop him from already knowing the environmental details and the common figures that often appeared in this area.

Lumian didn't hurry to Rue des Blouses Blanches. Instead, he circled Rue du Rossignol and entered his secure hideout.

As soon as he opened the door, his brow furrowed slightly.

There was only one trap at the door among the many he had set up—the simplest one.

Lumian's gaze then swept across the room, but he didn't see the ritualistic furs or the used cowhide and dog skin that were placed here in the real world.

It's not a strict correspondence… he muttered to himself.

The more he thought about it, the more he realized that this place resembled the real market district on the surface. In particular, in a room protected by traps, various details didn't correspond.

It's like an external observation and the re-creation of key rooms… It's like… It's like… Lumian's pupils dilated as he had an epiphany.

It's like painting!

…

Fake 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, Apartment 601.

Jenna clutched the lucky coin and offered a brief prayer to Mr. Fool. A thin gray fog materialized before her eyes but then dissipated.

"It… it's actually working," Jenna stammered.

That lucky gold coin proved to be truly lucky enough!

Jenna didn't receive any revelations, so she had no choice but to persevere and maintain her guise as her counterfeit self. She diligently tidied up the room and wiped the coffee table.

Time in this world appeared to pass slowly, with the sun in the sky staying fixed in its position, unmoving.

Suddenly, Jenna heard the door open and instinctively turned her gaze in that direction. The fake Franca continued with her task, showing no reaction.

Jenna's eyes locked onto Lumian's golden-black hair. She immediately averted her gaze and assumed an expression of emptiness, not certain if Ciel was the real deal.

In the next instant, she heard a familiar, taunting voice.

"As expected, you're here. That's all you can think of."

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Chapter 464 - 464 A World in a Painting?

Chapter 464 A World in a Painting?

Lumian closed the door behind him and smiled.

“You’re quite energetic. You’re not crying from fear.”

Jenna cautiously looked out the window, confirming that the faintly glowing figures had long disappeared.

Suppressing her urge to argue with Lumian, she wasted no time and asked, “How did you get in here too?”

As she spoke, she reminded herself, As an adult woman with rich life experiences and many setbacks, I shouldn’t argue with such an immature minor at such a critical moment!

Lumian’s gaze moved over to Franca, who was sipping red wine by the window. He settled onto the divan and leaned back comfortably.

“First, tell me how you got in.”

To be honest, he didn’t know why he had suddenly arrived in this strange place resembling Hostel.

Jenna remained standing by the coffee table, ready to assume a dummy appearance at any moment.

She then recounted how she had received a dream revelation, came underground to deliver the mission item, and acquired a lucky gold coin.

Lumian listened attentively without interruption. Finally, he chuckled.

“Now, I can answer your question.

“I was sent here by Mr. Fool to save you.”

He roughly understood why he had appeared in Room 207 of the fake Auberge du Coq Doré after waking up.

“Did Mr. Fool really send you? I don’t even know His—his full honorific name. Did my prayer succeed with just the lucky gold coin?” Jenna had her suspicions,

but she still found it unbelievable.

“Of course it’s true,” Lumian replied sincerely.

What puzzled him was something else.

Why did Mr. Fool send him and not Madam Magician?

If it were Madam Magician who had been pulled into the Hostel, the problem would have been easily resolved!

I’m afraid there’s another reason I don’t understand… Lumian pondered for a moment and focused on Jenna’s description of the world, then asked for confirmation, “From the outside, the only difference between this place and reality is Salle de Bal Brise?”

“I’ve only explored a few nearby streets and less than one-fifth of Avenue du Marché,” Jenna replied cautiously to prevent Ciel from making a misjudgment.

She then continued, “And inside, there are many differences. For example, here, the layout of the room, large pieces of furniture, and reality are the same. The other details are somewhat different.

“I suspect, I suspect…”

Lumian looked at Jenna and spoke before she could.

“A world in a painting.”

“Yes, a world in a painting!” Jenna’s hazy thoughts finally became clear.

Combined with the Painter Sequence and the paints and brushes she had found from the mutated monk, she believed that it was an oil painting that only copied some of the streets in the market district and possessed supernatural powers. It was called Hostel!

Jenna was both concerned and intrigued.

Drawing a painting seemed to create a world!

Lumian teased, “I’m glad you could also come to such a realization. It’s no easy task. This painting world isn’t considered advanced. The oil painting created by an angel of the Painter pathway might truly be a world with living beings inside.”

Unlike the current one, there were many aspects with fakeness.

What was the purpose of such a relatively low-level painting?

Without waiting for Jenna’s response, Lumian instructed her, “Check Franca’s hidden pocket and see if there’s a classic silver mirror.”

“Why don’t you search for it yourself? You know what that mirror looks like better than I do.” Jenna suddenly chuckled. “Don’t tell me you’re shy?”

Lumian said nonchalantly, “If you’re not here, I’ll search for it on my own. But since I can instruct you, why should I tire myself out?”

Jenna gritted her teeth and wasted no time. She walked to the window and rummaged through the fake Franca’s various pockets.

She quickly came to a conclusion.

“There are no ancient mirrors. Many of the hidden pockets weren’t depicted.”

Lumian nodded slowly and inwardly crossed out Plan 7.

He turned to Jenna and said, “Try Magic Mirror Divination and see if it works.”

Jenna, experienced, knew that Lumian wanted to use this opportunity to confirm if the world in the painting was connected to the spirit world and determine if his “teleportation” could succeed or help them leave. Therefore, she took out a makeup mirror from her hidden pocket and prayed to one of the safer targets Franca had provided.

Before long, the preparations for Magic Mirror Divination were completed. The palm-sized mirror turned gray, but there was no aqueous light.

With a subtle nod, Lumian replied, “It’s likely that there’s a fake spirit world here. If you activate Spirit Vision, you might be able to see a few remnant souls, but this isn’t connected to the real spirit world, so you can’t find the entity you’re trying to inquire about.”

In other words, he could “teleport” within the world within the painting, but he couldn’t leave it.

Lumian reached into his pocket, retrieved Mr. K’s finger, and flicked it in front of his eyes.

There was no reaction, nor was there any change.

“What’s this?” Jenna was taken aback.

Ciel actually carried a blood-stained human finger with him!

“It’s a mystical item. It can’t contact the outside world,” Lumian explained patronizingly.

Simultaneously, he sighed inwardly.

Mr. K’s finger seemed impressive, but it could never be used to its full effect.

Most of the time, Lumian had no use for it. When he needed it, the environment was often special, preventing him from using its connection to the true form to summon Mr. K.

Jenna didn't press further. She pursed her lips and said, "So, what should we do next?"

She couldn't think of any other way to leave this place. She could only consider starting with the black hole in Salle de Bal Brise, the edge of the painting world, and the situation with the two fake cathedrals.

Lumian chuckled.

"No need to rush. I still have eight plans left.

"But before we try them, we need to make a trip to Avenue du Marché and observe the black hole at Salle de Bal Brise up close."

"Are you planning to leave from there?" Jenna asked with a frown.

It seemed perilous.

Lumian stood up and walked towards Apartment 601's door. "It is my last resort, but it's also a necessary preparation. I don't want to try the other methods and fail, only to be discovered by the pixies and blocked by the tenants of the Hostel. When that happens, I won't even be able to approach Salle de Bal Brise even if I want to risk it."

Jenna looked out of the window again, only to see that the Sun was setting in the west, and the pixies' servants had yet to return.

Only then did she quickly follow Lumian down the stairs.

On the way, she inquired, "Why did those heretics create such a painting world to hide the Hostel's residents?"

Lumian pondered for a moment and replied thoughtfully, "I believe this is a secondary purpose. Overall, it seems more like a ritual.

"Think about it. This place resembles a phony market district. The Salle de Bal Brise should be the only place left without any correspondence. And I've already told you that beneath the Salle de Bal Brise are old bones from the Fourth Epoch. It's connected to the secret of église Saint-Robert's old cemetery. It's definitely not a coincidence that the world in the painting left it blank."

"I also think that's the key to the problem." Jenna instinctively wanted to prove that she wasn't stupid by having a similar guess.

As Lumian descended, he pondered and said, "When the abnormality truly occurs, will such a painting world temporarily replace some streets in the real market

district? Will only Salle de Bal Brise remain intact?

“Who and what is this to confuse…

“In mysticism, this represents the application of the Law of Similarity. When the similarity reaches a certain level, acts on the counterfeits can be reflected in reality…

“Could they be using this method to unravel Salle de Bal Brise’s underground secrets and uncover the old bones of the Fourth Epoch?

“No, it’s probably not just for the old bones… Are they trying to open the entrance to Fourth Epoch Trier?

“But it’s not that simple. The entire sealing system hasn’t been destroyed or weakened…”

Lumian gradually formed an idea, sensing that he was getting closer to the key plan of this disaster.

If he could ultimately grasp the truth, it would be an excellent performance for a Conspirer’s observational abilities.

Jenna nodded slightly, agreeing with Lumian’s guess.

As they conversed about the fake 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, their gazes suddenly froze.

On the road diagonally opposite, a woman in a loose strapped white dress was staring at them!

The woman had a beautiful face, her slightly curly black hair cascading messily over her shoulders. Her blue eyes were rather vacant, and her entire person appeared detached yet real.

Lumian and Jenna had encountered similar auras and feelings in another person.

It was the human model, Séraphine, Room 12 of the Hostel!

Is this another room in the Hostel—another human model? Why is she here? It’s as if she’s waiting for Jenna and me. Lumian tensed up and instinctively reached out with his right hand to grab Jenna’s shoulder.

Simultaneously, the beautiful woman’s voice drifted with a smile.

“Fate predestined us to meet.

“Convergence always happens inadvertently.”

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Chapter 465 - 465 Circle

Chapter 465 Circle

Convergence… Predetermined fate… Could it be Room 7, Voisin Sanson, and his family? As these thoughts raced through Lumian's mind, he activated the black mark on his right shoulder without hesitation.

Spirit World Traversal!

He and Jenna vanished, heading for the entrance of Auberge du Coq Doré. Lumian had never set foot on Avenue du Marché in the painting world, so he didn't have the coordinates for the spirit world there.

The spirit world in the painting realm still comprised dense layers of colors and countless transparent, strange figures. However, the seven bright and pure lights at the "top" appeared rather blurry, as if separated by many panes of mullioned glass.

Guided by his spirituality, Lumian pinpointed the corresponding coordinates at Auberge du Coq Doré's entrance and teleported there.

They swiftly departed the spirit world and found themselves on the street.

But what Lumian saw before them was the building at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, the very spot where they had just been.

They hadn't left the street onto Rue Anarchie; they had merely shifted seven to eight meters from one side of the road to the other.

Circle Inhabitant… Jenna and I are already ensnared in the Circle? Lumian turned his head and wasn't surprised to see the beautiful woman suspected to be Hostel's Room 7, standing only a few meters away on the same side of the street as them.

"Voisin Sanson?" Lumian asked in a deep voice.

He temporarily abandoned the idea of teleportation, as their previous attempt had proven ineffective in escaping Rue des Blouses Blanches.

As Lumian spoke, Jenna discreetly retrieved a mirror, preparing to utilize black magic to maneuver around and launch an attack.

She sensed that, at such a tense and crucial moment, Ciel's inquiry, instead of initiating a series of attacks, might be an attempt to divert the enemy's attention and create an opportunity for her to deliver a fatal blow.

Although Lumian had mentioned that Voisin Sanson was a Sequence 4 Circle Inhabitant of the Inevitability pathway, a Saint bestowed with a boon, a true demigod, she believed that they had to make an attempt, despite the odds. So what if he had undergone a qualitative transformation in various aspects compared to Low- to Mid-Sequence Beyonders that even a small team combined wouldn't be a match for him?

Upon hearing Lumian's question, the beautiful woman in a white dress revealed a fleeting and distant smile.

"Seems like you're well-informed…"

Before "she" could finish her sentence, Lumian took a step forward and harrumphed.

Two beams of white light shot out from his nostrils and landed on the woman suspected to be Room 7.

Although the Spell of Harrumph's power had increased following his advancement to Sequence 6, he didn't believe it would truly work on a Saint. At best, it might make her sway slightly.

Lumian opted for this approach instead of donning the Flog boxing gloves to target the various negative effects of a Contractee. As a Conspirer, he keenly noticed a crucial detail: he and Jenna were trapped in the "Circle," but Voisin Sanson hadn't left Room 7. He remained within the beautiful woman's body.

This clearly hindered his performance.

Therefore, he either had arrogance as a negative side effect of his contract ability, or he couldn't leave the Hostel's room for some reason.

Combined with his earlier hypothesis that the world in the painting and the situation in the Hostel were part of a ritual, Lumian was more inclined to believe the latter possibility.

In that case, even if my Spell of Harrumph can't affect you, can't it affect your room?

The human models, corrupted by the Painter pathway and adorned with special patterns, were equivalent to Mid-Sequence monsters!

As two beams of white light descended, the beautiful woman in the white dress fainted.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian and Jenna's vision blurred, and they felt slightly dizzy.

When they regained their senses, they found themselves back at the exit of 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, facing the beautiful woman in a white halter dress

diagonally across from them.

The woman's lips curled up, but she didn't repeat her previous statement.

Circle Inhabitant!

Lumian realized that he and Jenna were truly trapped in a loop, and the successful attack on Room 7 triggered the loop's restart.

Moreover, he confirmed that Voisin Sanson and his family couldn't leave Room 7 until something concluded. They could only exert influence on the outside world through obstacles. Otherwise, they would have opened the door and confronted Lumian with all their might. They sought to control the target with an Angel sealed in his body as efficiently as possible!

Even if Voisin Sanson had the negative side effect of arrogance, it was improbable for all three of his children to be the same!

Without hesitation, Lumian sank his consciousness into his right palm, revealing a few bright red scars.

An extraordinarily frenzied, violent, and high-and-mighty aura surged into the sky, as if it sought to dominate the land.

Alista Tudor!

Lumian activated the Blood Emperor's mark.

While this had no real impact in the physical world, it caused those around him to feel a slight fear, making them tremble. However, the response from the painting world exceeded Lumian's expectations.

The sky suddenly turned dark-red, and the westering sun appeared tinted with an iron hue as it swayed left and right.

Rue des Blouses Blanches and the entire world trembled as if struck by an earthquake.

The vendors and pedestrians on the street, as well as the residents and animals on both sides, blurred and distorted.

The beautiful woman in Room 7 of the Hostel was taken aback. She instinctively trembled and wanted to hug herself tightly.

An invisible force shrouding half of Rue des Blouses Blanches materialized, resembling transparent glass.

Suddenly, it shattered, revealing multiple cracks.

Seeing this, Lumian grabbed Jenna's shoulder and activated the black mark on his right shoulder once more.

This time, they swiftly passed through the local spirit world and arrived at Auberge du Coq Doré's entrance. They didn't return to the Circle.

The painting world existed between reality and fiction, and it was very sensitive to the aura of high-level figures, materializing the impact. As Lumian's thoughts raced, a distant rumble reached his ears.

It emanated from Avenue du Marché!

Lumian and Jenna exchanged glances as a term came to their minds: Salle de Bal Brise!

Has something happened to the black hole corresponding to Salle de Bal Brise?

Was it a subsequent change brought about by The Blood Emperor Alista Tudor's aura, or has the ritual officially begun, heralding the impending catastrophe? Lumian's thoughts raced as he raced towards Avenue du Marché.

Jenna's response was as swift as his, making the same decision.

…

Deep underground, in a hidden cave undetectable to the outside world.

The rock walls here had been meticulously modified, featuring two vertical beams and multiple horizontal beams, each marked with longitudinal gaps.

To anyone familiar with Trier's map, these formations would correspond strictly to a section of Avenue du Marché. Each rock wall was the equivalent of a side street, and each vertical gap represented an alley.

Adorning each rock wall were lifelike oil paintings, portraying buildings of various architectural styles, dark iron street lamps, pedestrians dressed as clerks, vendors selling an array of goods, and scenes from windows, all depicted with vivid and natural colors.

These scenes were almost identical to those on the corresponding streets.

On the eastern rock wall of Avenue du Marché, three men in white shirts with unbuttoned vests were using mural tools to craft a complex, bright red door at the spot corresponding to Salle de Bal Brise.

Their bodies were coated in paint, and their eyes displayed a peculiar detachment, as though they were gazing at a distant realm rather than a rock wall.

Each time they completed the bright red door on the rock wall, it mysteriously vanished after a fifth was completed. The three painters had no choice but to repeat their efforts in vain.

Suddenly, the mine trembled gently, and minuscule cracks that were almost imperceptible to the naked eye appeared on the rock wall adorned with various scenes.

The female painter in a blue beret and the male painter in red pants looked up at the depiction of Avenue du Marché on the rock wall.

In the next moment, they pressed their hands against the rock wall and vanished.

Two figures emerged within the massive oil painting. One was a woman donning a blue beret, and the other a man in red pants. They both wore white shirts and open beige vests.

The third painter, a man in his twenties, remained on the outside. He was clad in black pants with tassels, his brown hair disheveled, and a bit of stubble adorning his mouth.

The distant expression in his flaxen-colored eyes faded as he cautiously surveyed his surroundings.

Observing that the mine's tremors were limited to this area and that the anomaly in the painting hadn't extended, the young painter let out a sigh of relief. He redirected his gaze to the empty Salle de Bal Brise, seemingly contemplating whether to change his approach or wait for the right moment to try again.

At that precise moment, a skeletal palm suddenly extended from the rock wall and the ground.

It had a yellowish hue and a withered texture, with its surface covered in iron-colored rust, giving it an ancient appearance.

As soon as the skeletal palm appeared, it seized the young painter's ankle, aiming to drag him deep into the earth.

…

Late at night, 11 Rue des Fontaines, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.

Franca's dream had been an odd one, with various bizarre scenes woven together into a nonsensical narrative.

Suddenly, she jolted awake and instinctively looked to her side.

Although the room was shrouded in darkness due to the heavy curtains blocking the crimson moonlight, it didn't hinder her from noticing that the spot under the velvet blanket beside her was empty; Gardner Martin was nowhere to be found.

Franca's pupils widened with a mixture of surprise and suspicion.

It wasn’t that she was shocked by Gardner Martin’s disappearance. There was nothing he could do that would truly surprise her. What caught her off guard was her failure to detect his departure.

Demonesses possessed formidable spiritual senses. It was impossible for someone sleeping beside them to slip out of bed and leave without their knowledge. Franca had only snapped out of her reverie when she felt the drop in temperature on the other side of the bed!

Franca swiftly got out of bed, dressed, and opened the bedroom door.

The corridor lay in darkness, and an eerie silence hung in the air.

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Chapter 466 - 466 Encounter

Chapter 466 Encounter

Franca blended into the shadows and moved silently through the shadows, her eyes fixed on the crimson-lit corridor.

She even began to suspect that Ciel had failed to find her and had enlisted the help of Madam Magician to teleport Gardner Martin away. How else could he have vanished without her noticing?

The third floor of the grayish-white villa remained still. Franca listened closely, feeling like she was the only one left in the building. The butler, valet, maid, gardener, and chef seemed to have disappeared into thin air.

She cautiously approached the valet's room, extending her right palm and silently turning the handle.

Through her Dark Vision, Franca spotted two people lying on the bed, wrapped in each other's embrace and covered by a thin blanket.

Almost simultaneously, Franca's pupils dilated.

The two of them were headless, their necks nestled against each other, their wounds stained with blood.

Initially taken aback, Franca recalled Ciel's description of the Iron and Blood Cross Order's Supervisor Olson. She suspected that Gardner's valet and his lover had experienced a similar situation. Their heads had seemingly "come to life" and left their bodies.

Without further scrutiny, she quietly closed the door and blended into the dense shadows of the staircase.

Franca wanted to see if anyone else in the building had suffered a similar fate.

Upon descending to the first-floor hall, her eyes froze.

The armor and weapons that had been there were gone!

What a drastic change… F*ck, how did I not notice it at all? Franca, who had been confident in her abilities, experience, and reactions, couldn't help but waver.

In the next moment, the washroom door on the first floor swung open, and a lady's maid in an old nightgown emerged.

The lady's maid shook off the liquid in her hand and slowly made her way back to the servants' quarters, her head empty and her neck stained red.

Hidden in the shadows, Franca cast her gaze out the window. The two patrolling guards had also lost their heads, and the shadow reflected in the glass was like a magnified beer bottle.

Franca, having roughly confirmed the situation at 11 Rue des Fontaines, didn't hesitate and quickly sneaked out of the villa.

She planned to report this to Madam Judgment immediately and use the Primordial Demoness figurine to inform Browns Sauron and Demoness of Black Clarice about the anomaly here.

The latter necessitated a ritual. Franca was concerned that attempting it in this abnormal building would trigger unnecessary changes and bring unpredictable danger, so she decided to escape the abnormal environment before taking the corresponding measures.

In the darkness of the night, the Demoness of Pleasure lurked in the shadows of an empty house. She exited the building from the side and circled the lawn ahead.

…

Beneath Trier, Blazing Danitz forcefully opened the stone door.

Behind them, they found a small mine, with three classical oil lamps embedded in the stone wall—one high, and two low.

In the center of the mine, a staircase descended into darkness. The bottom was hidden in shadow, appearing to have no end.

Danitz retracted his fist and turned his body, signaling the nearly 20 sailors following him to enter the mine and cooperate.

Among them were Hunters responsible for observing the environment and detecting hidden traps and subtle traces. Seers used coin tosses or crystal pendants to determine the direction and danger of pursuit. A Mid-Sequence Sailor was ready to assist his teammates and handle any mishaps…

With this coordination, Danitz's team swiftly made their way through the stairs and tunnel, and their vision suddenly brightened.

They found themselves in a caved-in quarry cave, scattered with straw mats, rags, pottery jars, and other items.

Danitz scanned the area and chuckled.

"It's been turned into a weapons cache… Not long ago, dozens of rebels lived here."

His gaze shifted to the end of the quarry cave, where a wide tunnel led to an unknown destination.

A sailor standing beside Danitz clicked his tongue and remarked, “There should be many similar military hideouts nearby. Are the main rebel forces led by the Carbonari all here?”

“I’m not blind. I can see!” Blazing Danitz cursed. “The question now is, where did they go? Is the chaos about to begin?”

…

In the market district, at Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 305,

Anthony Reid was awakened by the previous earthquake.

Ever since his escape that night, he had become sensitive to various movements, although not as fearful as when he heard gunshots.

Given the dangerous signals provided by the intelligence they had discussed earlier, he couldn’t fall asleep quickly.

Anthony Reid got out of bed and poured a glass of light beer to ease his anxiety.

After using Placate on himself, he intended to force himself to sleep a little longer.

At that moment, he heard pounding at the motel’s entrance.

Who returns so late at night? It feels a little urgent… Anthony Reid listened intently, sensing that something was brewing in secret.

Before long, footsteps approached his door,

and Anthony Reid immediately opened it to peer into the dimly lit corridor.

He spotted an impatient man in a grayish-blue worker’s uniform and cap.

This was an informant he had developed at the docks.

“What happened?” Anthony Reid asked in a calm and gentle voice.

Having been placated, the informant’s anxiety dissipated, and he cautiously glanced around before lowering his voice.

“There will be a huge strike at the docks tomorrow. Rumor has it that weapons will be issued.”

“Issued weapons…” Anthony Reid’s mind instantly filled with images of barricades, incendiary bombs, smoke grenades, rifles, and two-wheeled carts symbolizing Trier’s chaos.

In Trier, due to the strong resistance of the citizens and their adeptness at protests and battles, such occurrences weren't too unusual, happening every two or three years, sometimes even two or three times a year. The only difference was in their scale. However, considering the critical situation before a terrifying catastrophe, a massive strike suddenly distributing weapons led Anthony Reid to consider the possibility that it had been premeditated and was part of the impending catastrophe.

The information broker produced a Louis d'or and instructed the informant, "Your intel is very important. Find an excuse not to go to the docks tomorrow and hide at home."

Instinctively, the informant bit into the gleaming Louis d'or, bid Anthony Reid a cheerful farewell, and departed from Auberge du Coq Doré.

Anthony wasted no time and swiftly descended to the second floor, arriving at Lumian's room.

He knocked lightly on the wooden door of Room 207, but as the sound reverberated, there was no movement inside. It was so silent, as if no one had lived there for a long time.

Anthony Reid stopped and furrowed his brow.

…

In the painting world, the westering sun cast its illumination on Rue Anarchie, keeping the sky bright.

Lumian and Jenna hurried past the broken gas street lamps, sprinting toward Avenue du Marché.

They were uncertain when Room 7, where Voisin Sanson's family resided, would discover their teleportation destination. Their goal was to reach the black hole representing Salle de Bal Brise before the other party could lock onto them again.

This way, even if their other plans failed or couldn't be completed in time, they still had a final option—to enter the black hole and try their luck to see where they would appear.

Thud! Thud! Thud! Lumian led Jenna forward, and Avenue du Marché came into view. He grabbed Jenna's shoulder and spewed crimson flames from his body, enveloping them both in a huge fireball.

The fireball sped forward with incredible velocity.

Lumian forcefully led Jenna across a distance of seven to eight meters towards the intersection of Rue Anarchie and Avenue du Marché.

During this process, Jenna, unlike Lumian, wasn't immune to the flames. Her hair and skin singed, but she didn't struggle violently. Instead, she shrank her body and created frost to resist the crimson flames, easing the pain.

In the blink of an eye, they reached the edge of Avenue du Marché.

From there, they had a clear view of Salle de Bal Brise in the distance and the pitch-black darkness.

This allowed Lumian to identify his destination without needing coordinates.

What he saw was where they'd arrive!

The black mark on his right shoulder emitted a dim light once more.

Spirit World Traversal!

In an instant, Lumian and Jenna appeared beside the darkness.

At that moment, a crystal-like wall materialized before them.

It extended upward, enclosing the entire Salle de Bal Brise like a transparent lid.

Lumian and Jenna subconsciously gazed up and saw two figures in the air.

One was a young woman wearing a blue beret, a tied-up white shirt, and dark pants. Her beige vest was open, and her body was covered in paint. Her orange hair was short, and her yellow eyes were deep and ethereal, as if hiding a world.

The other man, in his thirties, wore similar attire but with red pants for his lower body. He had gentle facial features, light eyebrows, and distant, ethereal blue eyes.

He still held a thick paintbrush in his hand, with a palette of mostly used paint.

Behind them, a pair of translucent dragonfly-like wings flapped gently, helping them hover in the air.

Painters? Those Pixies? Lumian and Jenna instantly speculated.

The man looked at Lumian with surprise and spoke in a voice that seemed to come from afar,

"Welcome back to the Hostel, Room 1."

Room 1… Lumian's eyes froze.

Room 1? Jenna couldn't help but turn to her companion in shock.

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Chapter 467 - 467 Old Bones

Chapter 467 Old Bones

Upon hearing the term “Room 1,” Lumian was genuinely surprised, even with his wealth of experiences.

Séraphine and Gabriel had previously mentioned that the Hostel had a total of 13 “Rooms,” but Room 1 had never been mentioned. It was as if it had never entered the Hostel. Lumian had always found this to be a mysterious omission, suspecting that there were critical points hidden in this fact. To his amazement, the painter-dressed man, likely a Pixie, now addressed him as “Room 1.”

This was beyond belief!

Lumian was certain that the symbols on him were related to Mr. Fool and the entity known as Inevitability. They had nothing to do with the Painter. While Termiboros, an evil god’s Angel, resided within him, it was fundamentally different from the Hostel Rooms like Séraphine’s.

They had different sources of power and were different forms of abode!

At that moment, Lumian didn’t waste time analyzing why the suspected Pixie called him Room 1 or whether there was important information hidden in it. He knew one thing—unless he could quickly eliminate or control the two enemies in midair and take command of the black hole in the Salle de Bal Brise area, the Hostel residents would undoubtedly notice the abnormality and rush their Rooms to the scene, making the situation more complicated.

Upon hearing “Room 1,” Jenna was equally shocked, but she didn’t question Lumian or waste time seeking answers. She retrieved the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty, made of obsidian, and plunged it into her chest, despite having used it only a few hours ago.

At this point, she cared little about the accumulation of mutations in her body.

Similarly, even if something was amiss with Ciel, she would have to wait until they escaped before inquiring about it.

As the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty pierced her chest, a dense black fog emanated from Jenna’s back, forming a pair of colossal and rather illusory bat wings.

With a powerful flap, she lunged for the woman in the blue beret and the man in red pants.

Simultaneously, black flames gradually condensed in the Witch's palm.

The colossal bat wings extended from bottom to top, obscuring the Painters' line of sight.

The man in red pants swiftly turned his paintbrush around and dipped it in silver paint, drawing a menacing lightning bolt on his clothes.

Silver-white lightning detached from the man's white shirt and struck Jenna's illusory membraned black wings, numbing her entire body with the crackling electrical energy. The dense black fog that had formed the bat wings was diminished by the lightning, and Jenna began to descend slowly as she lost control of her flight.

In that critical moment, Lumian's form materialized in midair right behind the painter in red pants.

Without the ability to fly or float, Lumian chose to "teleport."

Seeing Jenna use the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty to create Wings of Darkness and fly boldly towards the two presumed Pixies, Lumian understood that his companion was likely drawing the enemy's attention and creating an opportunity for him to swiftly attack one of their targets.

Witches rarely fought in such a manner.

"Ha!" Lumian exclaimed as a pale-yellow light, resembling a stream of air, shot forth from his mouth and struck the man in red pants.

Before the Painter, who had just drawn lightning, could react or even realize that Lumian had appeared behind him, he closed his eyes and lost consciousness.

Without suspension, he plummeted to the ground.

The woman in the blue beret remained composed. Figures emerged in her eyes, as if they held a world within them.

One of the figures traversed the boundaries of fiction and reality, moving from the realm of fantasy into the world within the painting.

Dressed in a light-blue dress with long, thick blond hair and serene light-blue eyes —Aurore!

It was Aurore!

Upon witnessing this, Lumian's resolve remained unwavering. His eyes burned with anger.

Are you worthy of imagining Aurore?

As he descended from the sky, crimson fireballs materialized around his body and were launched towards the woman in the blue beret.

The woman extended her right hand and pressed it into the void. Her entire being suddenly turned illusory, her expression vacant and cold.

Numerous fireballs landed on her, but they didn't detonate, as though there was nothing there.

They passed through her figure and exploded nearby.

At the same moment, the Painter in red pants landed before Jenna with a distinct cracking sound.

The excruciating pain brought him back from the unconscious state induced by Lumian's Spell of Harrumph. He instinctively opened his eyes.

Just as the woman in the blue beret dodged the explosion, she exited her peculiar state and flew toward Jenna, who was about to land.

In an instant, she collided with Jenna, sending starlight and sparks flying like meteors.

Crack!

Jenna's body shattered into fragments, transforming into mirror pieces that reflected the sunlight.

Her form reappeared beside the profound darkness within Salle de Bal Brise.

Lumian descended with a whoosh, his feet landing heavily on the ground, his body swaying.

At that very moment, the three of them, along with the woman in the blue beret, seemed to sense something. They turned their heads, casting their gazes towards the intersections leading into Avenue du Marché.

Women with detached dispositions, fleeting eyes, and indifferent expressions emerged from different directions. They were Room 12—Séraphine—and Room 7, which Lumian and Jenna had recently encountered.

Gabriel followed closely behind Séraphine, his gaze growing increasingly vacant, his face contorted with agony.

Jenna and Lumian felt a creeping unease, as if they were inexorably descending into an abyss.

Suddenly, a hand extended from the darkness within Salle de Bal Brise.

It was a hand devoid of flesh and skin, composed of withered, yellowed bones stained with rust.

…

In the enigmatic cave adorned with a colossal mural, the young painter altered his form and broke free from the skeletal palm's grasp.

He existed in a state between reality and the spirit world, untouchable by anyone and unable to touch anyone. His only capacity was to observe as the empty space on the rock wall and the ground intersected, turning dark and viscous, akin to a bottomless swamp.

At that moment, an incomplete skeleton, composed of dark-red stained bones and rust, emerged from the swamp.

The skeleton appeared to hail from ancient times. It extended its bony fingers into the oil painting on the rock wall, corresponding to the incomplete Salle de Bal Brise.

Beneath it, more yellowed skeletons crawled out from the depths of the swamp. Some bore shattered iron-colored armor, others carried rusty weapons, a few were missing a third of their bodies, and some were devoid of their heads…

…

In the market district, beneath église Saint-Robert, within the Inquisition.

In his office, Angoulême de Fran?ois, donned in a golden shirt, attentively observed his subordinates delivering intel one by one.

"A violent explosion in the direction of the Deep Valley Cloister…"

"Abnormal activity detected underground…"

"Saint Vième Cathedral has issued an order to maintain maximum vigilance tonight…"

"Someone at the docks is organizing a huge strike tomorrow morning and distributing weapons…"

"There are also people organizing a march at the factories to the south…"

The Purifiers had a vast network of informants, surpassing even the most prolific information brokers. The manifold reports concerning unusual events in various locations within the market district nearly made Angoulême lose control of his expression. His facial muscles twitched ever so slightly.

When it finally grew silent, and no more subordinates came in to report, Angoulême stood up, adjusted his collar, picked up a substantial dossier, and

slammed it onto the table.

While doing so, the Purifier deacon cursed silently, Hidden Blade, do you want me dead?

Ever since Hidden Blade had informed him about Gardner Martin's collaboration with the Carbonari, the anomalies between the Carbonari and the Deep Valley Cloister, and the Hostel's situation, various irregularities had emerged from every corner, relentlessly testing his nerves.

Only a few hours had passed, but Angoulême felt as though a tempest was gathering.

Phew… Angoulême exhaled and compiled the gathered intel, Hidden Blade's reports, and the questions she had requested clarification on into a single document. He pinned it to the wall with a thumbtack, hoping to discern any patterns or overlooked details.

The Purifier deacon's gaze roved the room.

After some time, his eyes settled on one of the documents.

Hidden Blade had inquired about the secret of église Saint-Robert's old cemetery but hadn't received an answer.

The old cemetery lay within the current Salle de Bal Brise.

Angoulême's heart stirred, and he resolved to seek answers to this question once more.

It was one of the few things he could undertake at the moment.

Blasted Hidden Blade, once this matter is resolved, if you don't leave the market district, I'll request a transfer! Angoulême inwardly cursed as he hurried into the telegraph room, angrily composing a telegram.

He intended to convey to the higher-ups that they shouldn't be overly strict about confidentiality classifications when it concerned intelligence.

The sooner he could figure out the details, the sooner he could unearth the truth and forestall impending catastrophe.

After a ten-minute wait, Angoulême received a response:

"The old cemetery of église Saint-Robert is situated above a node for the sealing of Fourth Epoch Trier. In the past, there was a breach that led to the release of some Fourth Epoch deceased. Subsequently, it was reinforced, and the situation was contained.

"When the sealing system for the catacombs replaced such nodes, the old cemetery lost its significance and wasn't retained."

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Chapter 468 - 468 Q&A Game

Chapter 468 Q&A Game

He returned to the office and fixed his gaze on the piece of paper pinned to the wall.

The paper not only clearly detailed Hidden Blade's previous inquiry about the old cemetery's secret but also provided the circumstances under which she had made the inquiry.

This was all part of their investigation into the Sick Church case!

Their goal was to uncover the reasons behind the unusual quietness of Trier's heretics and their activities as though they had gone into hiding for some massive endeavor.

Hidden Blade suspects that the old cemetery's secret is somehow linked to the heretics' plans? They aim to use the former leakage point to bypass the seal and open the door to Fourth Epoch Trier? Angoulême, with his experience, immediately connected the dots.

Entering the telegraph room, he informed the higher-ups of his theory and made a recommendation.

"Send one or two teams underground to investigate the original leakage point as soon as possible, preferably led by Saints."

After sending the telegram, Angoulême breathed a sigh of relief.

His next task was to assemble his team and coordinate with the police, military police, and army to prevent the protests from escalating into riots before dawn.

This process would inevitably lead to clashes with members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order and the Carbonari. Beyonders would also be involved.

Additionally, as 007, Angoulême needed to find an opportunity to contact Hidden Blade and share the secret of the old cemetery with her.

There was no more time for casual chats in the telegram group; he had to activate their prearranged practical approach.

…

Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

“Ciel is missing too?” After informing Madam Judgment and Demoness of Black about Gardner Martin’s abnormality, Franca returned to the market district, only to realize that Jenna, who should have been asleep in bed, had vanished. Before she could inspect the house, Anthony Reid, with his buzz cut, visited late at night and reported that Lumian had mysteriously vanished. There were no signs of a fight at the scene.

“Yes,” Anthony Reid was even more certain that something was amiss. It wasn’t Lumian switching to a safe house for sleep.

“There are no signs of a struggle here either…” Franca walked to the guest bedroom door and looked at the lifted blanket.

She could tell that Jenna had taken her time before leaving. Not only had she removed her pajamas and changed into her female mercenary attire, but she hadn’t messed up the bedroom.

Franca furrowed her brow, pondering the possible reasons.

Amidst her thoughts, she remembered that Jenna hadn’t handed over the grayish-white cloth bag she had obtained from the cyborg monk to the strange boy, Will.

Seeing the grayish-white cloth bag vanish, the Demoness of Pleasure heaved a sigh of relief.

Jenna must have been “notified” by the strange boy, Will, to deliver the mission item somewhere and collect the corresponding reward.

And why did Ciel disappear?

Could it be that Will’s request was for Ciel to accompany her?

Yes, after all, he was invited by Ciel’s Major Arcana card holder, Madam Magician…

“Doesn’t seem like a terrible thing?” Anthony Reid keenly sensed Franca’s change in state.

“So far, that’s the case.” Franca produced a palm-sized mirror. “I’ll use Magic Mirror Divination to confirm.”

She retrieved Jenna’s pajamas and caressed the mirror with her free hand.

Simultaneously, she recited in Hermes, “Celia Bello’s current location, Celia Bello’s current location…”

Although the name “Jenna” could also be used for divination, as Jenna had been using this stage name for a long time, and most people around her called her that, Franca felt that it would be more accurate to use her real name at a time like this.

In the gas-lit living room of the apartment, the lights dimmed, and the environment became oppressive.

The mirror's surface emitted an aqueous light, as if it had sunk into the depths of a river.

However, Franca saw nothing. Snowflakes kept appearing in the mirror like noise.

The divination yielded no results… Franca frowned again.

Could it be because of the presence of the strange boy, Will?

However, after handing over the mission item and obtaining the lucky gold coin, Jenna should have separated from Will. They shouldn't have been together for more than five minutes. Theoretically, it can't be such a coincidence…

Franca was cautious. "We'll try again in five minutes."

Anthony Reid nodded gently and asked, "Do you need me to go to Auberge du Coq Doré and retrieve one of Ciel's clothes?"

"No need." Franca shook her head without hesitation.

That fellow bears Mr. Fool's seal and the aura of the Blood Emperor. It would be strange if I could gain anything from divination!

Time ticked by, and finally, five minutes passed. Franca used the simple Magic Mirror Divination to inquire about Jenna's location once again.

There was still no answer, and no scene appeared.

In the dark mirror, an aged voice echoed, accompanied by the sound of water.

"Celia Bello is in an undetectable location."

Undetectable… Franca began to feel that the problem might be more complicated and troublesome than she had guessed, so she asked, "Where is Lumian Lee now?"

Amidst the sound of water, the aged voice replied, "I can't see, I can't see…"

The voice gradually faded into confusion and disorder. Franca hastily ended Magic Mirror Divination.

She paced back and forth, feeling that she had to report this matter to Madam Judgment.

But before that… Franca clenched her teeth and said to Anthony Reid, "I want to use Magic Mirror Divination to pray to an unknown and hidden entity. The results of His divination are the most precise. Perhaps it can help us obtain an answer, but

you have to swear to the God of Steam and Machinery not to divulge everything you hear later."

"No problem." Anthony, clad in military-green attire, gestured a Triangular Sacred Emblem on his chest.

After Anthony swore an oath to the deity he believed in, Franca didn't hesitate. She lit three candles in a ritualistic manner and extinguished the gas wall lamps in the room.

In the dim light, her right hand caressed the mirror's surface three times as she recited an honorific name in Hermes.

"Eyes that watch all living beings, the stigmata from the Primordial Land, the omniscient one who serves The Fool, the great Arrodes…"

The glass of the makeup mirror darkened, fluctuating and enshrouding at times, emitting aqueous light.

As a Psychiatrist, Anthony Reid suddenly felt a strong sense of unease, as if a pair of eyes had scanned him from top to bottom.

Franca finished her preparations and asked, "Where is my friend, Celia Bello, now?"

In the mirror, an aqueous light flickered, revealing an image:

It was a mine that was too blurry to see the details clearly.

Immediately after, the scene shifted, revealing a portion of Avenue du Marché.

Franca recognized it immediately as the Salle de Bal Brise area, but the building didn't exist. Instead, it was replaced by a dark and crystal-like barrier. Jenna, dressed in a light-blue dress, stood beside the barrier, her expression solemn as she observed an unrevealed part of the scene. Beside her was a figure suspected to be Lumian.

As expected, they're together… Where is this place? Just as these thoughts crossed Franca's mind, she saw a few lines of ancient Feysac words dripping with blood appear on the mirror.

"Based on the principle of reciprocity, it's my turn to ask a question."

"If you answer incorrectly or lie, you will be punished."

Franca closed her eyes, waiting for the question to be raised.

The blood-red letters formed another sentence: "Have you ever fantasized about doing Trieriens' favorite activity with Jenna?"

Thankfully… Franca breathed a sigh of relief.

The shame of this question depended on Jenna's presence. If she were present, Franca would rather slam her head against a wall. But now, there was only one Psychiatrist watching.

Is there a problem with telling a Psychiatrist that I have a psychological problem and like women, my good friend, so much so that I want to do that with her?

Franca couldn't help but blush, but she replied smoothly, "I did."

Anthony Reid, who was observing, wasn't surprised at all. As a Spectator, if he didn't discover Franca's abnormal feelings and thoughts about Jenna, it could only mean that he wasn't up to standard.

He hadn't expected Franca to be relatively calm and not ashamed.

Franca then asked the magic mirror, "Where is the Avenue du Marché where Jenna currently is?"

This time, there was no scene in the magic mirror. Instead, bright red terms appeared: "A world in a painting."

A world in a painting… Painter, Pixie… Franca immediately made a connection and a guess.

On the mirror's surface, bloody words distorted and squirmed, forming new words:

"Based on the principle of reciprocity, it's my turn to ask a question."Have you ever fantasized about doing Trieriens' favorite activity with Lumian Lee?"

"…" Franca's face burned. She could feel the temperature rising.

I-I haven't… She subconsciously wanted to respond, but then she remembered the pain of being struck by lightning.

She gazed at the magic mirror, striving to forget that there was a Psychiatrist beside her. Her lips quivered as she replied, "I-I have. Sometimes, just occasionally! I can't control myself in my dreams!"

Anthony Reid didn't allow his gaze to shift to Franca's face, nor did he allow his expression to change. It was as if what he saw and heard was ordinary.

This was the basic professionalism of a Psychiatrist.

Franca hurriedly concluded Magic Mirror Divination and entered the master bedroom. She organized information on Lumian, Jenna's disappearance, and the Magic Mirror Divination's response into written information and reported it to Madam Judgment.

After completing this matter and returning to the living room, she was about to discuss the situation with Anthony Reid when she heard a rumbling sound from the northwest of Trier.

It was as if multiple cannons were firing.

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Chapter 469 - 469 “Reinforcements”

Chapter 469 “Reinforcements”

Quartier éraste, Trier’s garrison encampment.

Under the dim moonlight, a significant number of soldiers poured out of various buildings. They organized into teams with remarkable precision, either firing cannons at the distant roadblocks or shouldering rifles as they advanced toward Avenue du Boulevard in coordinated squads.

Among them were combatants equipped with steam-powered backpacks and massive firearms, strategically positioning themselves on elevated vantage points and in concealed spots.

Inside a building within the camp, Albus, his hair appearing to be dyed red, sat confidently in an officer’s chair, his legs casually crossed at the edge of the table before him.

In his field of vision, disembodied heads dangled by bloody spines, almost like they had extended tails.

These severed heads soared toward headless bodies clad in blue soldier coats adorned with golden threads. They aimed for the vacant necks, inserting their bloodstained spines with precision.

Crack! They completed their “integration” simultaneously, twisting left and right to acclimate themselves to their new hosts.

The freshly created soldiers promptly retrieved their weapons and charged out in an orderly formation, following mysterious directives.

Albus Medici clicked his tongue and remarked, “This is quite the reminiscent sight. Will this night turn into a bloodbath?”

…

Beyond the multitude of towering steeples and the golden-hued buildings, Magician and Justice were alerted by the distant rumble of cannons.

“An early uprising?” Magician, dressed in a crisp white collared shirt and a beige dress, gazed with starlight in her eyes, as if she had glimpsed through the veils of the spirit world and witnessed the turmoil at the military encampment.

Her prior astromancy predictions had suggested that the catastrophe was still some time away. However, when Jenna caught the cyborg monk and discovered their ties to the heretics and job of transporting paints and brushes, it was evident that destiny had shifted, setting the illusory gears into motion prematurely.

The catastrophe had begun without proper preparation.

Justice, garbed in a light-blue dress, listened to the booming cannons and responded with a composed tone, “Given the scale, it’s clear that this won’t topple Intis’s current government. It can only incite a certain degree of temporary chaos…

“Could there be strikes, protests, marches, riots, and other forms of civil unrest colliding?”

“These are the strengths of the Iron and Blood Cross Order and the Carbonari. Perhaps Gardner Martin and some of his associates went into hiding to spark the flames, but it appears their coordination isn’t strong enough. Without effective collaboration, they can’t establish a connection.” Magician’s gaze shifted toward the southeastern region, where Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, the market district, and Quartier du Jardin Botanique were situated.

Justice nodded in agreement and added, “This means that our efforts have yielded results. They were compelled to accelerate their plans. It’s impressive they accomplished such a feat given these circumstances.”

As soon as she finished speaking, the “doll” messenger, dressed in a light-gold gown, materialized from the void and handed the letter from Judgment to Magician.

“Good evening, Miss Justice. A good day to you,” the messenger cheerfully greeted Justice.

She was a mysophobic, obsessive-compulsive creature from the spirit world with a penchant for beauty, and Miss Justice was the embodiment of her preferences.

On the other hand, her employer had many shortcomings that she found intolerable. Therefore, she often took on additional tasks herself. This, however, had built a strong bond of closeness and trust between them.

Magician unfolded the letter and quickly scanned its contents. Her expression underwent a subtle change.

“A world in a painting.”

“Did Arrodes use the lucky gold coin and The Fool’s seal on Lumian to gain a vague glimpse of the scenes within the painting world?

“Partial glimpses of Avenue du Marché…”

After murmuring to herself, Magician turned to Justice and said, “I have a rough understanding of what those heretics are after and why they are utilizing the Hostel’s form and the essence of its rooms.

“We can’t afford to waste any more time. Let’s take action now. Control or eliminate Lady Moon before we search for the painting world.”

Justice nodded. “Agreed.”

She then smiled and added, “We should place our trust in our comrades and collaborators.”

“Very well.” Magician took a step toward the Sacred Heart Cloister, her beige dress hem billowing in the breeze.

She raised her hands, and a constellation of resplendent stars materialized around her.

They appeared both distant and densely packed, converging to create a night sky over the highlands.

The countless stars cast their radiance upon the surface of the Sacred Heart Cloister.

With a determined effort, Magician lifted the void in front of her, as if bearing a heavy burden.

Amidst the tumultuous yet silent vibrations, the Sacred Heart Cloister, along with its myriad steeples and the ground beneath it, was “projected” into a pitch-black void. Fierce hurricanes and layers of darkness encircled them.

Almost simultaneously, brilliant sunbeams illuminated the interconnected buildings, as if conjuring thousands of miniature suns.

They resisted the encroaching darkness, striving to reveal the concealed void.

Magician and Justice vanished, reappearing in a space that seemed to bend and contract, forming a dark sphere.

Close by, a crouching golden retriever activated Psychological Invisibility, carefully observing her surroundings and maintaining the highest level of vigilance.

…

Painting world, Avenue du Marché.

From the darkness that corresponded to Salle de Bal Brise, dark-red and rust-stained yellow skeletons emerged.

They exuded a palpable aura of death, and the strong scent of rust and blood hung heavy in the air. When gathered together, they created and intensified a frenzied and violent atmosphere.

This sensation was tangible, immediately shaking the crystal barrier enveloping the darkness. It produced numerous cracks before silently collapsing.

Witnessing this horrifying scene, the woman in the white halter dress who had brought the Sansons to Avenue du Marché and the various rooms with similar auras to Séraphine's brought over, certain words spoken by the "doll" messenger flashed through Lumian's mind.

Those old bones!

With a swift thought, he seized Jenna's arm with his left hand and immersed his consciousness into his right palm.

Bright red scars reappeared, and an exceptionally violent, maddening, and domineering aura surged from his body, causing the blue sky, white clouds, and the setting sun to visibly quiver.

Even Séraphine and the other "rooms," despite their experience, were taken aback and couldn't help but shudder.

The two pixies outside were even more terrified, convinced that a formidable presence had descended and that the painting world was on the brink of collapse.

The yellowish, ragged, and incomplete old bones creaked and turned, bowing their heads in unison to Lumian. They refrained from instinctively attacking the nearest humans.

Lumian raised his chin slightly and pointed his right hand with an icy determination at the "rooms" and the two pixies.

The old bones, clad in tattered armor and brandishing rusty weapons, transformed into dangerous incandescent fireballs that exploded towards every genuine target.

The blue-beret-wearing pixie's pupils dilated, and she abruptly extended her palm into the void.

Her form turned ethereal once more, suffused with even greater emptiness and indifference, as if she had hidden herself in another realm.

Boom!

The white-hot fireball merged with her form, resulting in a powerful explosion, but it couldn't reach the distant fantasy world and harm its intended target.

The Painter, donned in red pants, had suffered a severe fall, with fractured bones and a lingering sense of dizziness. There was no time to change his condition. His

only option was to attempt a rapid repositioning, employing the maximum speed a Sequence 8 could muster. Yet, just as he sprang to his feet, he was struck by a blazing white fireball.

Boom!

The Pixie was left in a gory state from the explosion. His abdomen was torn open, internal organs spilled out, and his left arm severed. Severe burn marks covered his body.

He lost consciousness, his life ebbing away.

The incandescent white fireball hurtling toward Séraphine and Gabriel suddenly veered into the wilderness, distancing itself from the indifferent and vacant human models by several hundred meters.

The farther it flew, the weaker it became. After enduring for a hundred to two hundred meters, it eventually touched the ground and exploded.

Perhaps the most dangerous factor was the woman in the white halter dress, with curly black hair and a beautiful face. She appeared soulless as multiple blazing white fireballs were aimed at her.

However, the hazardous fireballs either bypassed the raised palms of the human model or exploded prematurely in a strange manner. Some even ascended into the air and transmuted into fireworks.

It was akin to Room 7 being impervious to attack.

Not far from Séraphine, there stood a stunning woman in a bright red dress. Her eyes held a vacant quality, and her aura appeared somewhat detached.

At that moment, she watched a blazing white fireball hurtling toward her like a meteor, remaining utterly motionless.

The blazing white fireball grew fainter and smaller. Just as it was about to collide with its target, it completely extinguished and reverted to a yellowish skeleton holding a rusty spear.

The skeleton swayed a few times before disintegrating, the withering sensation becoming more pronounced.

In the café diagonally opposite, an elegant plump lady in a black dress materialized. On one hand, she seemed to have lost her vitality and appeared unusually ethereal. On the other hand, she displayed a yearning expression and gaze. She opened her mouth as the incandescent white fireball approached and raised her hands, clutching a silver knife and fork.

With a whoosh, she sliced the blazing white fireball in half.

An illusory vortex filled with fanged phantoms formed in her mouth, devouring a portion of the fireball, “neutralizing” the threat.

Boom!

Most of the fireballs lost their course and veered off, shattering the café’s glass and toppling tables, chairs, and nearby outer walls.

Beside the darkness of Salle de Bal Brise, Lumian watched the old bones transform into blazing white fireballs, attacking the various “rooms” and the two pixies. He didn’t wait to see the final outcome or seize an opportunity to launch a surprise attack. He grabbed Jenna’s arm, kicked with his right foot, and lunged towards Salle de Bal Brise’s original location, where the old bones had emerged.

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Chapter 470 - 470 Three Heads, Six Arms

Chapter 470 Three Heads, Six Arms

Lumian and Jenna plunged into the darkness, the area that should have been Salle de Bal Brise before the Hostel's "rooms" and the blue-beretted pixie could escape the entanglement of old bones.

His vision plunged into darkness before specks of spiritual light emerged ahead.

They converged like resplendent stars, turning densely packed, akin to a black velvet curtain adorned with diamonds or countless grains of sand in water.

Amidst these spiritual lights, an ancient, heavy, illusory, and mysterious door materialized in distortion.

Iron-black, its surface marred by dark-red rust, as if a large amount of blood had spilled upon it.

…

In Underground Trier, within the undetectable mine.

In his untouchable state, the Painter witnessed yellowed skeletons clamoring into the colossal oil painting on the rock wall. Iron-black and dark-red lines outlined themselves in the previously empty Salle de Bal Brise, forming a door that shouldn't exist in reality.

"It's not time yet, not time yet…" The Painter, with tassels adorning his trouser legs, stared blankly, unable to believe such a development.

Though he and his accomplices had been attempting to depict this imaginary door, they knew it was destined to fail. At most, they would complete a fifth of it before having to start anew. They persisted for the experience, anticipating that once the ritual commenced, they could draw the crucial parts swiftly.

Having already finished the main part of the Hostel oil painting, they had nothing else to do. Why not try a few more times? What if a miracle occurred?

Now, a miracle unfolded without their attempts!

The Painter gazed at the transformation before him, a mix of anticipation and shock.

He couldn't help but look up at the cave ceiling and silently mutter, Do we not need cooperation from aboveground to make the entrance appear?

Could the abnormality in the painting world be causing this?

If we don't coordinate with the surface in time, even if the entrance appears, we won't be able to bypass the seal and enter…

…

Lumian and Jenna descended as if through a dark pipe, uncontrollably approaching the void adorned with spiritual specks of light and the bloodied, rusted door.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian's left chest heated up, and terrifying ravings echoed in his ears from an infinite height and distance.

Familiar with this sensation, indicating the corruption of Inevitability in his body, Lumian knew Termiboros was up to something, and Mr. Fool's seal had been triggered.

However, unlike before, Lumian refrained from attempting to crack the seal to steal Inevitability's power. Consequently, he didn't enter a state of excruciating pain, just a bit dazed.

In his daze, Lumian saw Séraphine—Room 7—clad in a white halter dress. Other "rooms" with varied appearances and attire, yet nearly identical dispositions,

seemed to detach from the painting world and overlap with the fake Avenue du Marché.

The left chests of these "rooms" emitted a faint glow, suggesting they too had seals on them.

Lumian's head spun as a scene—whether real or fake—unfolded before him.

Séraphine and the other 12 "rooms" stepped into the void and surrounded him, invisible and hidden connections intertwining.

Jenna, arm clutched by Lumian, sensed something and turned her head.

Flesh on Lumian's left and right shoulders writhed as two illusory heads emerged.

One head looked like a ten-year-old Lumian, covered in dirt, and his eyes filled with ruthlessness. The other, nearly thirty, with blood-red hair and iron-black eyes, looked violent and crazy.

Wh— Jenna felt as if she had entered a nightmare, witnessing her companion transform into a monster.

Lumian's body expanded, gripping Jenna like a palm-sized puppet.

Behind him, illusory arms sprouted from his ribs.

Lumian didn't neglect the changes in his body. He saw his current form in Jenna's eyes.

A three-headed, six-armed giant!

It bore a striking resemblance to the monster in Cordu's ruins!

However, Lumian didn't lose his mind. He was certain The Fool's seal on his chest and Termiboros were still intact.

An illusory collision reverberated as Lumian crashed into the ancient, heavy, and mysterious door, causing it to tremble and creak. It was about to open.

At that moment, the spiritual spots on the black velvet curtain lit up, stabilizing the iron-black door stained with blood and rust.

Witnessing and experiencing this, Lumian suddenly grasped what Hostel was, why they referred to him as Room 1, and the heretics' intentions and plans.

The concept of Hostel likely emerged after the Tree of Shadow disaster.

At some point, Maipú Meyer, ostracized, established contact with other cults, informing them of Lumian's existence and state.

They imitated the situation where an evil god's Blessed was sealed within Lumian's body, creating Hostel, Rooms 2 to 13. They invited various evil gods' Blessed to take up residence, establishing a mystical connection among them based on this systematic similarity.

When Lumian entered the painting world, actions taken on the other "rooms" of Hostel were equivalent to acts on Lumian.

When the Hostel took shape and all the "rooms" were pieced together, Lumian couldn't help but be affected.

Since the "rooms" displayed the levels of their residents, Lumian underwent a corresponding change.

The resident within him was an Angel, Termiboros!

After the mysticism-based Hostel ritual, Lumian, lacking the strength of an Angel or a true Mythical Creature form, had briefly attained the level of an Angel!

This explained why Voisin Sanson and company didn't leave the room and attacked Lumian directly.

Termiboros was sealed, so they naturally wanted Him too. They had to maintain this state until the ritual ended!

Of course, the heretics weren't kind enough to help Lumian experience the state of an Inevitability Angel. Their goal was to use this opportunity to enter Fourth Epoch Trier.

Opening the door using an Angel's level!

Hence, the Hostel had to align with some areas of the market district and exhibit environmental similarities.

Lumian speculated that the Salle de Bal Brise's underground corresponded to a weak spot in the seal. In the past, there had even been problems. Many old bones, guided by Alista Tudor's aura, had crawled out. The corruption leaked, affecting 13 Avenue du Marché.

This made Lumian wonder if his arrival in the market district and his stay at Auberge du Coq Doré had something to do with the attraction the underground area had on Hunters.

Due to this crucial information, the Salle de Bal Brise in the painting world remained blank and dark. The streets surrounding it and the people who often appeared nearby were replicated in appearance.

When the corresponding ritual truly commenced, the surface's market district and the underground market district would likely undergo a switch. Reality would become a fabrication, and fabrication would become reality, revealing or outlining the seal corresponding to Salle de Bal Brise, weakening it to the extreme.

When the time came, Lumian, an Angel, could "open" the door to Fourth Epoch Trier!

Maipú Meyer's return to the market district aimed to harness his Actor abilities, acting as different individuals. He would enter various houses and assist Pixies in grasping the specifics of these streets to complete the massive painting of Hostel.

Worried that Lumian, Franca, and others would notice in advance, he avoided their rooms, lacking sufficient knowledge.

Looking at the mysterious door beneath him, Lumian tried to distance himself, but he couldn't break free. It was as if a huge magnet was sucking him—now an Angel—behind the door, causing him to involuntarily squeeze inside.

Thanks to countless spots of spirituality in the surrounding darkness, the ancient door, stained with blood and rust, didn't open.

Lumian sensed that this was because the Hostel ritual hadn't fully commenced.

He and Jenna had barged into the painting world ahead of time, disrupting the heretics' arrangements!

Now, if the Hostel ritual was to be completed and the surface and underground switched, there were at least two key points that couldn't be matched.

Firstly, the subterranean seal, which could only be released by destroying Trier and eliminating most of the people here, now had the switch between reality and fabrication, a temporary acquisition of an angelic level, and the discovery of weakness in the seal; thus, the requirement could be significantly reduced. However, lowering the requirement further would necessitate a riot bringing chaos to the surface Trier.

Secondly, it was afternoon in the painting world, and the Sun was only westering. The sky was still bright, but in reality, it was the middle of the night. The moonlight was dim, and the darkness was dense.

…

Avenue du Marché, market district.

In a double-breasted brown coat, Angoulême de Fran?ois noted the secret of église Saint-Robert's old cemetery on paper, placing it in the safe house provided by Hidden Blade, hoping she would discover it in time.

The Purifier deacon guided his robot toward Imre and Valentine, who awaited near Salle de Bal Brise.

At that moment, the rumbling salvos reached his ears.

Instinctively, he turned his head to see Trier's sky illuminated by flames.

An army rebellion? Angoulême furrowed his brow.

Now, most Purifiers from the dioceses were dispersed to quell strikes, marches, and protests after daybreak.

Unexpectedly, trouble arose in the military camp!

Was news of the massive strike deliberately sent to us, forcing a dispersion of forces and making it impossible for us to organize manpower to resolve the problem in a short period of time? A conspiracy by the Iron and Blood Cross Order? Angoulême instantly had a suspicion.

…

In Quartier éraste, a wilderness emerged from the Sacred Heart Cloister that had been thrown into turbulence and darkness.

Lady Moon's voice resonated, her smile evident as she addressed Magician and Justice,"You might not have guessed who's sheltering us this time…"

Before she could finish, the sound of a baby crying echoed.

"Waaa!"

The baby's cries were vibrant, bringing forth endless golden sunlight.

The entire Sacred Heart Cloister transformed into a blazing sun, piercing through the turbulent storm and distorting space.

In the real Trier, the still-sleeping citizens were jolted awake by the sunlight.

In Apartment 601, Franca and Anthony Reid instinctively looked up at the suddenly bright sky.

A dazzling golden sun hung in the sky, positioned to the west.

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Chapter 471 - 471 Topsy-Turvy

Chapter 471 Topsy-Turvy

Angoulême, racing towards église Saint-Robert with Imre and Valentine to gather more intel and receive the latest orders, suddenly found himself blinded by sunlight. It was as though he had been shrouded in darkness for too long, struggling to adapt to the sudden brightness.

After a few moments, he and his teammates gazed skyward.

In Trier, where it had been late at night, the scene had transformed into a sunny afternoon!

Feeling the warmth of the sun, Angoulême couldn't shake off the chill crawling down his spine. He sensed that the problem had escalated dramatically, and a catastrophe loomed on the horizon.

In the blink of an eye, a series of explosions echoed from the Rist Docks, Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, Suhit's steam locomotive station, and the nearby depot and warehouses.

Thunderous rumbles echoed through the air. Even from a distance, Angoulême and his comrades witnessed the crimson flames and burning structures. Gunshots, salvos, and shouts pierced through the chaos.

The entire market district plunged into anarchy.

Is Quartier éraste's military rebellion thinning Trier's Beyonder forces to support the insurrection in the market district? This can't be the same group responsible for the earlier docks and factory strikes at dawn… What is happening? Angoulême's expression hardened as he changed course, hastening towards the epicenter of the most intense explosions.

Imre and Valentine followed closely behind.

…

In Salle de Bal Brise, the café on the second floor,

Gardner Martin donned his silver-white full-body armor and positioned himself by the window. A smirk played on his lips as he observed Angoulême de Fran?ois and his team departing the area.

The leader of the Savoie Mob could already envision the chaos unfolding at the Rist Docks, Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, and other key locations.

Without reservation, he unveiled the hidden might of the Iron and Blood Cross Order in the market district, aiming to sow maximum chaos in the shortest time possible.

Whether it was “Blood Palm” Black overseeing Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, Vincent Lorraine at the Rist Docks, Parsifal managing the depot, or Faustino, the infiltrator at Suhit’s steam locomotive station, each was leading a team in acts of arson, detonating explosives, and unleashing indiscriminate destruction and carnage.

“Fortunately, we were well-prepared. Even if we had to expedite our plans, we can still complete the corresponding ritual,” Gardner Martin remarked to Supervisor Olson, standing not far behind him.

Olson, resembling a starving bear, clutched his small brown suitcase, his voice indifferent as he inquired, “You didn’t eliminate the Demoness?”

Gardner Martin grinned.

“No need to waste effort on such a foolish Demoness. She poses no real threat. Moreover, taking her down would be time-consuming, and you’re aware of their formidable survivability. It might cause us to miss the crucial moment.

“As for the others causing trouble, I dispatched Albus to the military camp in Quartier éraste. Lumian…”

At the mention of Lumian, Gardner Martin’s smile broadened.

He lifted the visor of his helmet, peering out the window once more.

Under the brilliant sunlight, the flames of Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman painted the sky crimson. Shouts, cries, gunshots, and explosions reverberated through the air.

Gardner Martin tilted his chin upward, closed his eyes, and contentedly awaited the unfolding climax of the play.

The ritual was on the brink of completion.

…

In the painting world, the westering sun in the sky assumed a heightened realism, its glow merging with the faint shadow in an uncanny dance.

Similar transformations unfolded across every structure. Vendors and pedestrians on the streets ceased to be lifeless figures, now frantically darting about in pandemonium, desperately seeking refuge.

The subterranean market district and its surface counterpart gradually transitioned into tangible existence. One was now bathed in flames like an oil painting, and the two began to mirror each other, interweaving as “projections” in the spirit world.

Suddenly, like illusory objects flipping upside down, the painted market district emerged on the surface, severing its complete seal with the rest of Trier. The authentic market district had transformed into a mural within the cave, linked to the underground.

In the actual Trier, Salle de Bal Brise existed in darkness, mitigating the effects of the seal.

Within that darkness, the three-headed, six-armed giant, Lumian, adhered to the enigmatic door. With a resonant creak, it slowly swung open, stained with blood and red rust, revealing a crevice seemingly ablaze with invisible flames.

Rumble!

Trier shuddered in its entirety, and the sunlit sky descended into a twilight adorned with fiery clouds.

…

Quartier éraste, Red Swan Castle.

Count Poufer, roused from his slumber, snapped awake in the midst of a dream.

Blood-stained sunlight filtered through the thick curtains, accompanied by cruel and frenzied screams.

The beige castle, adorned with ancient bloodstains, trembled violently, as if a colossal entity beneath the ground clung to its foundations.

Poufer felt a summoning and a magnetic pull from the depths of his soul. Excitement painted his expression as he hastily vacated his bed and dashed out of the bedroom.

In his frantic haste, he disregarded slippers and eschewed a change from his dark-red cotton robe. Barefoot, he sprinted down the corridor, the hem of his robe swinging behind him.

How many nights had he yearned for this awakening?

It signified the long-awaited recognition from the remnant spirit of his ancestor, the fulfillment of the prophecy by the mysterious leader of the Secret Order, and the dawn of hope for the Sauron family to reclaim their strength. It meant the end of the curse that haunted the other Saurons and the promise of rebirth!

Count Poufer understood the potential consequences for himself, but he faced the situation without flinching or hesitation.

Hadn’t every member of the Sauron family, choosing to reside in Red Swan Castle and not relocating after reaching adulthood, been mentally prepared for this moment?

To become the vessel for their ancestor’s resurrection, to merge with Him, was an honor for every Sauron family member!

Descending the stairs, Count Poufer entered the underground maze.

In the darkness behind him, a figure emerged from the vicinity adjacent to the stairs.

It was Elros, donned in beige hunting attire with her long auburn hair tied into a ponytail.

The girl, bearing both the Sauron and Einhorn bloodlines, followed her cousin at a steady pace, her presence silent yet profound.

…

In Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, in the market district.

Franca and Anthony Reid found themselves momentarily bewildered as they witnessed the sun appearing and hanging low in the west.

It’s past 2 a.m. What sun could there be?

What was going on?

Why was this strange phenomenon happening?

Their thoughts were abruptly shattered by the reverberations of explosions and gunshots in the market district. Anthony visibly trembled, instinctively attempting to dodge the unforeseen onslaught.

Fortunately, having chosen to remain in Trier earlier, he managed to regain control more effectively than in past episodes.

A shared glance exchanged between Franca and Anthony revealed surprise, confusion, and underlying worry.

“Has the catastrophe struck?” Anthony Reid queried in a deep, resonant voice.

Franca, brow furrowed, mused, “But according to Bouvard’s corpse’s prophecy, the catastrophe was accompanied by rain and water, and now…”

Before she could complete her sentence, her spirituality alerted her to something outside the window.

An unmistakable phantom materialized in the building opposite, the two figures overlapping and swiftly parting ways.

Simultaneously, a wave of dizziness enveloped Franca, as if she had plunged weightlessly and failed to utilize an Assassin's Feather Fall.

Anthony Reid experienced a similar sensation. He spoke solemnly,

"Indiscriminately affecting everyone?

"The effect of a ritual?"

A ritual to trigger the catastrophe?

Just as Franca considered suggesting leaving the apartment to approach The Fool's cathedral at the Lavigny Docks for a clearer understanding, her attention was drawn to the abrupt changes in two items tucked within her hidden pockets.

She quickly made a judgment based on the locations they were located.

One was the palm-sized Primordial Demoness figurine, which, even through clothing, exuded an abnormal coldness.

The other was the ancient silver mirror from the underground, an object connected to a peculiar mirror world. It trembled subtly, as if stirred or resonating with the current environment and nearby objects.

Wh— Franca's eyes narrowed.

Coupled with the simultaneous movements of the two items, she suspected the presence of a high-level Beyonder of the Demoness pathway nearby!

…

In the Sacred Heart cloister, now transformed into a sun, the continuous cries of an infant filled the air.

The cries unsettled Madam Magician with a starlit visage, causing a multitude of door-shaped insects to crawl in and out. Miss Justice, her skin covered in grayish-white scales, was compelled to Placate herself.

The piercing sunlight forced the two Major Arcana card holders to instinctively shut their eyes. Before them, voids intersected, and layers of starlight blocked the spreading flames "into the distance."

They recognized the incoming force all too well.

It was the divine power of the Eternal Blazing Sun!

Although this true god hadn't physically descended from the spirit world into reality, Lady Moon, who had nurtured a deity, and the newborn baby she held, indirectly channeled some of His strength.

The power of a god!

Magician and Justice, though struggling to endure, remained composed. They knew they weren't alone.

Upon discovering Lady Moon's hideout in the Sacred Heart Cloister, they had anticipated the worst-case scenario.

…

On the Blue Avenger at the Lavigny Docks, The Hanged Man Alger, adorned in a sailor's attire with dark-blue hair, positioned himself at the bow of the ship. Witnessing the sudden brightening of the sky and the sun hanging low in the west, a mix of worry and excitement washed over him. Swiftly, he retrieved an item from his possession.

It was a card featuring Emperor Roselle with raised hands and a papal tiara adorning his head. Behind him, the depiction showcased lightning, violent winds, and tumultuous waves.

The Tyrant card!

One of the Cards of Blasphemy crafted by Emperor Roselle.

The Hanged Man Alger had made a special trip to Trier, abstaining from involvement in operations elsewhere, anticipating the worst calamity!

Through prior communication, pre-installed imprints, and adept prayers, as a Saint of the Sailor pathway, he possessed the ability to employ the Tyrant card. This allowed him to temporarily harness someone's power, enabling resistance against the sun in the sky without jeopardizing the stability of the astral world.

Whoosh!

As Alger bowed his head in prayer, the Tyrant card illuminated, causing Trier's sky to darken. Countless water droplets descended to the ground beneath the sunlight.

Rain, a deluge of torrential rain.

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Chapter 472 - 472 Weather

Chapter 472 Weather

His body involuntarily straightened, and his head snapped up.

The Tyrant card in his hand suddenly thickened and brightened, transforming into a luminous book.

The pages of the book rapidly flipped, revealing various forms of Emperor Roselle. He alternated between the attire of a Sailor, sporting a nautical hat, and singing with head held high amidst the waves…

The scene settled on the Emperor donned in a papal tiara and a pontiff's robe.

His interaction with the dim sky summoned a colossal bolt of lightning, piercing through the clouds.

Rumble!

Amidst the thunderclaps, the illusory figure of Emperor Roselle merged with The Hanged Man Alger.

His demeanor abruptly became dignified, and the Srenzo River around the Blue Avenger instantaneously calmed, resembling a windless lake.

"Adorning" the papal tiara and "draping" the pontiff's robe, The Hanged Man Alger conjured a silver staff condensed from lightning.

Stepping forward, he ascended into the sky, surrounded by the wind.

Rumble!

Above Trier, thunder roared, and a visible hurricane swept up myriad dark clouds, forming a colossal, dark, and ominous vortex.

Within the vortex, dense bolts of lightning of various hues intertwined, extending out to shroud the blazing sun in the west.

Whoosh!

The rain, like an opened faucet, cascaded into every nook of Trier, creating a misty fog that enveloped everything.

In the blink of an eye, a layer of water covered the ground, illuminated by both sunlight and lightning.

The citizens, roused by the morning sunlight, now felt an impending apocalypse as they stared at the pitch-black backdrop untouched by the blazing sunlight and snake-like lightning.

…

In the profound darkness corresponding to Salle de Bal Brise, Lumian, a colossal giant standing over ten meters tall with two additional illusory heads and four exaggerated arms, witnessed the mysterious door to which he was attached slowly creaking open with a weighty grinding sound. Gradually, a crack emerged, and within the fissure, formless flames flickered.

The iron-black door, tainted with blood and rust, finally broke free from its constraints, and the crack became more pronounced.

Holding Jenna tightly, Lumian couldn't resist the ominous pull and descended through the door.

His left chest glowed, and, along with the entire Hostel and the other twelve rooms, they were on the verge of passing through the mysterious door.

…

In the real market district, on the second floor of Salle de Bal Brise.

As reality and fiction switched, Gardner Martin, Supervisor Olson, and the members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, who hadn't gone to set fire to Rist Docks and other locations, seamlessly transitioned into the painting world.

They remained on the ground, beside the deep darkness that represented Salle de Bal Brise. This was thanks to a figure who had silently materialized behind them.

Behind Supervisor Olson stood a man in formal attire, sans a bow tie. Aged between his thirties and forties, he possessed a high nose bridge, deep-set eyes, and light-blue irises. His slightly curled brown hair framed an unusually stiff countenance, his eyes reflecting open disdain and arrogance.

Behind Gardner Martin stood an old man with meticulously combed dark-red hair, clad in a blue military suit adorned with a sash and medals.

Though wrinkles marked the old man's face, his dark eyes emanated sharpness capable of toppling houses and uprooting the earth wherever they landed.

They were the president and the most powerful vice president of the Iron and Blood Cross Order. Under their guardianship, Gardner Martin and Olson remained unaffected by the heretics' ritual, refraining from entering the painting world.

As for the other upper echelons of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, they wreaked havoc in various parts of Trier, diverting the attention of official Beyonders.

Observing the dark depths of Salle de Bal Brise morph into a pair of blood-stained iron-black doors, the four members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order entered without hesitation, as if they had executed the maneuver countless times before.

…

In the deepest depths of Red Swan Castle, within the hall located in the underground maze.

Count Poufer, clad in a robe and barefoot, had already arrived. By the glow of white candles, he fixated on the rusty bronze coffin.

The coffin's lid shifted, unveiling illusory purple flames that filled the interior.

These flames merged with the iron-black ring embedded in the ground, beneath the bronze coffin. They blended with the viscous blood and withered hearts within the ring, forming an entrance—a deep entrance tainted with blood and rust.

Through this entrance emanated a lofty, bloody, and frenzied aura from the underground.

Count Poufer trembled under the influence of the aura, yet his eyes burned with fanaticism and fearlessness.

This was his first proximity to the ancestor's mind!

A twisted smile adorned Poufer's face as he strode forward, passing through the peripheral glow of candlelight and approaching the anomalous bronze coffin.

In the entire world, only the Sauron family members with the corresponding talents who had bided their time in Red Swan Castle, the mysterious leader of the Secret Order, and the long-dead Emperor Roselle knew that beneath Red Swan Castle lay another breached seal of Fourth Epoch Trier.

Vermonda Champagne Sauron, who once dominated the Sauron family, had gone mad and entered the upper levels of Fourth Epoch Trier!

His frenzied spirit lingered at the seal, inextinguishable. His anguished roars echoed, affecting everyone in Red Swan Castle and those of the same bloodline.

Now, it was time to put an end to the curse that had caused the Sauron family's decline and trapped the Saurons in nightmares!

Count Poufer felt a potent sense of mission and honor. With the conviction that he would die here, he laughed maniacally, pressed his hand to the edge of the bronze coffin, and lay down.

His figure plummeted into the deep entrance stained with blood and rust.

As Count Poufer vanished into the bronze coffin, Elros Einhorn, in a beige hunting suit with a ponytail, entered the hall.

Her gaze swept over the white candles and the bronze coffin, scrutinizing the changes in the seal. She then cut her finger, dripping three drops of bright red blood on the ground.

Lowering her head, she recited solemnly, “The embodiment of Iron and Blood, the symbol of the Calamity of War, the Priest who controls the weather, the great Snarner Einhorn…”

After finishing the incantation, the blood on the ground boiled, expanding into a blood-colored lake before condensing into a figure clad in iron-black, blood-stained armor.

Standing over 1.8 meters tall, with long dark-red hair and flamboyant golden earrings, the figure exuded androgynous, handsome features.

Darkened brown eyes fixed on Elros as the figure nodded gently and spoke,”Well done. In the previous war, the family lost its most important object. We must seize every opportunity to make up for our losses, even if it’s just a portion.”

With that, Snarner Einhorn entered the deep entrance of the bronze coffin.

Elros’s eyes flickered as she observed the scene.

Finally, she sighed and said, “Regardless, the Sauron family’s curse will end…”

…

In Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Franca, with a mixture of surprise and concern, took out the Primordial Demoness’s bone figurine and the ancient silver mirror she had obtained from underground.

Uncertain about the significance of the abnormality in these two items, she decided to place them at a distance. Her plan was to wait and observe subsequent changes before deciding on the next course of action.

At that precise moment, the classic silver mirror unexpectedly reflected the Primordial Demoness figurine, even though it wasn’t in its line of sight. This occurrence triggered a seismic disturbance throughout Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Dark light surged from the mirror, enveloping Franca and Anthony Reid before they could employ any abilities.

As the darkness subsided, only the coffee table, sofa, and various furnishings remained in Apartment 601.

Adjacent to the mural depicting a segment of the market district, behind the ecstatic Painter, an ancient silver mirror detached from the painting world and gently descended into the shadows. Gradually sinking deeper and deeper, it swiftly vanished.

…

Amidst the indescribable heat and the swirling world, Lumian and Jenna landed on a ground covered in pale-black stone bricks.

Their eyes were met with the sight of a magnificent city in the distance, featuring asymmetrical black buildings and vibrant red houses.

A thin fog intermittently shrouded the city, giving it the appearance of a mirage, the kind occasionally encountered by pirates and sailors.

In the wilderness beyond the city, dark clouds gathered, lightning flashed, thunder rumbled, and rain poured. A colossal figure, dozens of meters tall, stood surrounded by these natural phenomena, barely visible and indistinguishable.

“He” lingered outside the city, enveloped in smoke, flames, hail, lightning, torrential rain, and violent winds, as if perpetual.

Is this Fourth Epoch Trier? Lumian speculated, though uncertainty lingered. This wasn’t quite what he had expected.

Jenna subconsciously turned to look at him and noticed that he had reverted to his original appearance, no longer abnormally huge. He no longer possessed three heads and six arms.

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Chapter 473 - 473 Weakening of Corruption

Chapter 473 Weakening of Corruption

“You’ve recovered,” Jenna whispered to Lumian.

She refrained from speaking loudly, fearing that it might agitate her companion and trigger the same mutation again. Plus, there was the concern of attracting the ominous giant’s attention, shrouded in smoke and rain that made it elusive.

Lumian locked eyes with Jenna and realized from the reflection that he was back to normal.

Subconsciously, he responded, “This means the Hostel ritual, conducted by the heretics using me as a template, has ended…”

Suddenly alert, Lumian scanned the area.

With the Hostel ritual concluded, he anticipated the arrival of the evil gods’ bestowed from the other twelve rooms.

His gaze focused on an unusual area adorned with pale-black stone bricks, dominating the scenery.

It sprawled out, filling Lumian’s field of view, except for where it stopped short of the distant grand city and the colossal figure amidst the turbulent weather.

Stretching across his vision, grayish-white stone pillars loomed every 20 to 30 meters, some standing tall and others succumbing to collapse. These pillars, broad enough to span the reach of three to four people, obstructed Lumian’s and Jenna’s view beyond.

The sky above, supported by these stone sentinels, took on an odd translucency, as though an unseen fire silently raged, invisible to the naked eye.

The resulting glow cast an eerie brightness, akin to dusk on a war-torn battlefield. Lumian, lacking Dark Vision, could perceive his surroundings clearly without conjuring a crimson fireball.

He didn’t notice Madame Pualis and the other bestowed of evil gods.

“Did the residents of the Hostel not enter, or are they scattered in various places, arriving at random locations?” he mused aloud.

Unfazed, he redirected his focus, hoping Jenna possessed the pertinent information.

Though Jenna grappled with the concept of "random," she grasped Lumian's intent.

Without delving deeper into that mystery, she pivoted to the more pressing concern.

"What should we do now?"

At the same time, Jenna made a connection.

The Hostel was created using Ciel as a template… Based on the mystical knowledge involved in a Demoness's curse, could Ciel harbor an evil god's bestowed within him? Uh… He seemed to have mentioned before that he had Mr. Fool's seal on him, and the one sealed is an evil god's bestowed? The transformation was actually similar to the effects of a curse, but due to the seal, there were no serious consequences?

What do we do? Lumian assessed the chaotic scene before him: a colossal, blurry giant amid smoke, rain, lightning, and flames. He chuckled,

"Our move now is to put some distance between us and that giant."

"We'll head in the opposite direction of the city, find a secure hiding spot, and observe the unfolding events. Our goal is to locate an exit swiftly."

Despite feeling an unusual pull towards the giant and the city, Lumian managed to resist. He was no longer under the intense attraction that had gripped him before—now that he lacked an angelic level. Rationality prevailed as he carefully considered the risks and benefits.

The giant, undoubtedly godlike in nature, seemed to be in a state of madness. Lumian, a Sequence 6 Conspirer, couldn't afford to approach it casually. Just a glance could make him lose control!

The city, possibly Fourth Epoch Trier, held its own dangers—one that caused even demigods to perish within—with potential undead creatures and corruption like the old bones. Lumian had The Fool's seal and the aura of Blood Emperor Alista Tudor, but he couldn't feel as relaxed, carefree, or fearless as returning to Cordu before the corruption.

If he had entered the Fourth Epoch's Trier with such intentions, he might have turned into an irrational, perpetually lingering monster sealed with an angel in the blink of an eye.

With that, Lumian turned and sprinted in the opposite direction of the giant's figure in the ever-changing weather, away from the magnificent city.

He needed to put some distance between himself and the looming threat. Nobody could predict if the massive creature would make any noise!

The unrestrained voices of high-level Beyonders posed a grave danger to Mid-Sequence Beyonders.

Jenna put her trust in the seasoned Ciel and followed him with grace. They maneuvered past the grayish-white stone pillars, some standing tall while others lay in ruins, pushing further into the area paved with light-black stone bricks.

As Lumian sprinted, a slight frown creased his forehead.

He could feel a significant drain on his spirituality after the intense battle in the painting world and multiple Spirit World Traversals. If another mishap occurred, he questioned how long he could endure.

I need to find a way to replenish my spirituality… In reality, it's midnight. Should I lay low until 6 a.m.? Lumian contemplated as he dashed forward.

…

In the fake market district on the surface, torrential rain cascaded upon Séraphine and the other "rooms."

They stood on the street across from Salle de Bal Brise, their chests radiating with various hues.

One by one, figures materialized, piercing through the void and descending into the profound darkness. They entered the iron-black door tainted with blood and rust within the depths of the shadows.

Séraphine gazed at the surreal scene, her vacant eyes and rigid expression suddenly overtaken by sorrow. Rainwater drenched her long brown hair.

Beside her, Gabriel's face beamed with joy as he spoke in an otherworldly tone, "Is it over? Can we be together forever?"

Séraphine's rain-soaked face twisted. She instructed Gabriel, "Leave this place and stay away from me!"

"Why?" Gabriel questioned, perplexed.

Séraphine's role as a Hostel Room had been fulfilled. There shouldn't be anything else, right?

The monster could resume its normal life.

Séraphine uttered in pain, "With the tenants gone, the Hostel's rooms no longer hold any value…"

Before she could finish, a pair of transparent dragonfly-like wings sprouted from her back, etched with open, cold eyes.

Silently, Séraphine's form disintegrated. The wet lake-blue dress lost its support and plummeted to the ground. Adorned with writhing flesh and blood, each piece bore dragonfly-like, dreamy wings and eye-like patterns.

Séraphine's head remained relatively intact. Surrounded by blood dragonflies, a few wheat ears and mushrooms sprouted from her face. Raindrops struck her face and slid.

She opened her mouth, as if leading to another world, and her voice turned shrill.

"We're not bestowed, but the work of pixies!

"Go!"

Gabriel stared vacantly at Séraphine, a composition of blood dragonflies and a head. An indescribable sorrow etched across his empty, cold face.

In the midst of the pouring rain and sunlight, he instinctively took a few steps in the opposite direction before halting.

The playwright turned, retracing his steps toward Séraphine.

A gentle smile curled on the corners of his mouth.

"I'd forgotten. I'm already a monster. Where can I go?

"I'm grateful you let me run on my own in the end."

As Gabriel spoke, he bent down, allowing his knees to touch the ground and the puddles.

His arms enveloped the countless blood dragonflies and Séraphine's struggling head, and he planted a deep kiss on the lips adorned with wheat ears and mushrooms.

Thud! Thud! Thud! The blood dragonflies sliced through his flesh with their wings, burrowing into his body, draining his life force.

He persisted in the kiss.

Raindrops pelted them.

Before long, translucent and dreamy wings emerged from Gabriel's back, stained with blood.

Amidst the spine-chilling gnawing sounds, Gabriel's body collapsed and melted, likewise for Séraphine's head.

In the midst of the ensuing blood, strange-shaped dragonflies with translucent wings, resembling meatballs, soared into the air, resembling bright fireworks in a storm.

Suddenly, blazing sunlight descended, engulfing the area and the abnormal bodies.

Not far away, Angoulême, Valentine, and Imre spread their arms in unison.

Upon returning to église Saint-Robert, they remained unaffected by the ritual, no longer within the world of the painting. They stayed grounded, and once the situation stabilized, they made their way to Salle de Bal Brise.

…

Quartier éraste, Sacred Heart Cloister.

Storms and lightning veiled the golden sun, but for now, they couldn't thwart the sunlight from piercing through.

This caused the entrance to Salle de Bal Brise to blur and tremble, yet it persisted. The painting world that had swapped with the surface gradually became ethereal, drawing nearer to returning to the rock wall.

After Magician and Justice escaped the onslaught of sunlight, they realized they had lost Lady Moon's trail.

The former's eyes sparkled with resplendent stars.

Soon, she "saw" Lady Moon's silhouette.

The evil god's Blessed didn't conceal herself as she forcefully entered the unstable darkness and the mysterious, illusory iron-colored door.

With a flash of starlight, the Major Arcana card holders, Magician and Justice, arrived outside Salle de Bal Brise.

The two hesitated, uncertain whether to pursue her.

At that moment, Justice softly exclaimed, "I feel that the underground's allure and beckoning towards me have weakened…"

Their hesitance stemmed from the fact that delving deep underground into Fourth Epoch Trier would subject them to immense and abnormally terrifying corruption for demigods.

The heretics didn't mind. Essentially, they had gone mad. At most, their madness would be more intricate and thorough, but they had no choice but to consider this issue.

"The corruption has weakened?" Magician was surprised.

As far as she knew, only two individuals could cause this phenomenon:

One was Mr. Fool or The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings. By temporarily bolstering the seal's power, They could curb the various corruptions in Fourth Epoch Trier and diminish them.

The other was the deity who had gained a rudimentary grasp of the greatest abnormality underground: "The Lord that created everything, the omnipotent and omniscient God, the Lord who reigns behind the curtain of shadows, the ruler of the mind world, and the degenerated nature of all living things."

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Chapter 474 - Justice, adorned in a simple yet elegant dress, turned her head to glance at Magician, discerning her thoughts.

Justice, adorned in a simple yet elegant dress, turned her head to glance at Magician, discerning her thoughts.

Magician didn't hesitate. With a sigh and a chuckle, she stepped into the faltering darkness.

Justice followed closely behind.

As they vanished, sunlight flooded the sky from Saint Vièvе Cathedral on Trier's island area, coalescing into a miniature sun.

The sun's rays pierced the darkness of Salle de Bal Brise, illuminating a translucent woman in a white robe adorned with golden threads. She possessed a captivating beauty and emitted a holy aura, as if impervious to the touch of dust.

Trier's guardian angel paid no heed to the Sacred Heart Cloister as she passed through the illusory door with a crack.

Simultaneously, a whistle resonated from the patriarchal cathedral of the God of Steam and Machinery to the north of Trier.

As if part of a ritual, it emitted an iron-black chimney, serving as the building's spire.

A substantial amount of pale-white fog billowed into the air, contorting and writhing to take on a discernible form.

The figure that materialized was tall and handsome, with long chestnut hair. Cloaked in a monk-like gray robe and a white apron,

He was Saint Bornova, recently assigned to the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery in Trier.

Unlike Saint Vièvе, the Angel didn't enter the seal; instead, He hovered in the air, vigilant against potential mishaps, including an attack from the Rose School of Thought's Abomination.

At that moment, a colossal hurricane erupted, enshrouding the golden sun above the Sacred Heart Cloister in dark clouds, lightning, and torrential rain.

With the advent of this apocalyptic phenomenon, the already unstable effects of the ritual, disrupted by various interferences, could no longer be sustained. The figures in the paintings lingering on the ground and the illusory illusions of surrounding buildings became instantly recognizable as fake.

This virtual reality-like scene seamlessly overlapped with the tangible market district once more.

Just as the surface and the underground were on the brink of switching, a figure materialized abruptly in front of the mirror-like darkness of Salle de Bal Brise.

This figure sported straight eyebrows and blue eyes, along with long chestnut hair cascading to the waist. Adorned in a white shirt with ribbons and flowers, a brown captain's coat with intricate patterns, beige pants, and dark brown leather boots, the ensemble exuded an eclectic charm.

In her left hand, she gripped a golden item engraved with mysterious patterns, resembling a miniature lamp.

Silently, the wick extending from the lamp's mouth spontaneously ignited, emitting a viscous, aqueous golden light.

Within the luminous glow, a distorted and indistinct pale-gold figure materialized. In a dignified and majestic voice, it conveyed,

The woman holding the peculiar lamp scrutinized the pale-golden figure deeply before her body suddenly turned ethereal, disintegrating into countless symbols and words. Like a torrent, she surged through the iron-black door and the completely collapsed darkness.

Franca and Anthony Reid, emerging from the dark light, regained their vision to find themselves in a dimly lit mine.

A feeble light seeped into the mine from a distance, offering limited visibility.

Damn it, did I enter that special mirror world again? Did the anomaly in the market district cause the Primordial Demoness's figurine to resonate with the ancient mirror, triggering a chain reaction? Franca cursed inwardly.

What is this called? When it rains, it pours!

As a Spectator, Anthony Reid's immediate response upon confirming his condition was to observe his surroundings.

He noted that the mine wasn't overly expansive, with no other tunnels branching off. There was only one path ahead, leading toward the faint light.

Franca, in that moment, realized that this place differed from her previous visits. It felt like she had reached the end of a particular dead end. Granted, she and Lumian had never thoroughly explored this special mirror world, making it normal for them to be unfamiliar with uncharted areas.

“Where are we?” Anthony Reid inquired of Franca, who clearly held some knowledge, when he saw a figure emerge from a crevice in the rock wall beside him.

The figure curled up and hugged him, trembling.

The figure, dressed in military-green attire and sporting a light-yellow crew cut, was Anthony Reid himself!

As if sensing Anthony’s gaze, the figure turned his head, his dark brown eyes filled with resentment and malice.

Unfazed, Franca sighed with familiarity. “Your mirror version isn’t too aggressive.”

The trembling Anthony Reid vanished.

Franca averted her gaze and briefly elucidated their location and the means of departure.

Upon checking her belongings, she realized that only the ancient silver mirror was missing. The Primordial Demoness’s bone figurine remained securely in her possession.

Franca concluded, “The problem now is that the path out is guarded by a powerful monster. I relied on Ciel’s uniqueness to divert it last time. I don’t know what to do now.

“Let’s find another exit first. Yes, we have to hurry. Staying in this mirror world for too long will cause problems.”

“Alright.” Anthony Reid, lacking experience in this area, chose to heed Franca’s suggestion.

The two of them paid no mind to the faces lurking in the darkness on either side. They swiftly moved forward and entered the only tunnel.

As they progressed, the illumination increased, and visibility improved.

After walking for a while, Franca and Anthony Reid halted at a suspected exit.

It resembled a cave, sealed by pure light.

However, she received no response.

“Phew…” Franca exhaled and said to Anthony Reid, “Let’s give it a try. If it’s not right, we’ll retreat. There’s no other way.”

“Okay.” Anthony Reid nodded and placed his hand on the door of light alongside Franca.

Their figures passed through.

…

Lumian and Jenna sprinted between towering, collapsed grayish-white stone pillars until they reached the edge of the area covered in pale-black stone bricks.

However, what awaited them was still the pitch-black and blood-red city, with the giant figure shrouded in violent winds, lightning, heavy rain, smoke, and flames.

The only change was their perspective, now positioned on the side instead of facing the giant and the turbulent weather.

Confused, Jenna muttered, “We were running in the opposite direction. Why did we circle back?”

Lumian glanced back and explained, “As a Hunter, it’s unlikely for me to get lost. The current situation suggests that there’s a problem with the directions of this space. Perhaps, no matter where we run, we’ll eventually return to this vicinity.”

Fortunately, the distance between them and the giant figure had barely increased, estimated to be two to three thousand meters.

Upon hearing Lumian’s explanation, Jenna cast her gaze forward.

Beyond the pale-black stone bricks, in the wilderness connected to the majestic city, mirror fragments were scattered. They weren’t large, but there were thousands of them.

Lumian surveyed the scene, contemplating an alternative plan.

A sudden realization struck him—a swift method to rapidly restore his spirituality.

In a space effective at weakening the influence of an evil god, he could execute a ritual, siphon the boon, and ascend to Sequence 6 Ascetic of the Inevitability pathway!

By destabilizing various states, the ritual would promptly restore and amplify Lumian’s spirituality.

In essence, he could exchange the stability of his current state for the enhancement and replenishment of his spirituality.

Before initiating the ritual, Lumian needed to ascertain one crucial detail.

Would this place render Mr. Fool incapable of observation?

If that were the case, Termiboros might exploit the ritual to escape with the unintelligent seal itself. After all, the core of the ritual involved breaking the seal and drawing out the corresponding power of Inevitability!

Just as Lumian was about to instruct Jenna to keep a vigilant watch, a figure emerged from a shattered mirror in the wilderness.

Their pupils dilated, and instinctively, Lumian and Jenna sought cover behind the grayish-white stone pillar and the partially collapsed rubble.

The figure swiftly materialized, standing over 1.7 meters tall and clad in a black cloak.

Lumian stole a quick glance in that direction before retracting his gaze.

The figure seemed oddly familiar.

Before long, a familiar voice rang out from the side.

“You’re not slow either.”

Th-this is Gardner Martin! He’s involved too? Lumian didn’t dare to peek out.

Then, he recalled the identity of the cloaked figure.

The Carbonari member he had encountered, the one followed by Franca!

Shouldn’t the Carbonari be causing chaos on the surface? Lumian wondered.

At that moment, Jenna produced a mirror and gestured if Lumian needed assistance.

She could use mirror magic, utilizing mirror-like items to display their reflections onto a designated mirror.

Numerous mirror fragments lay nearby at the edge of the wilderness.

Lumian shook his head slowly and mouthed and gestured to Jenna, signaling her to “Wait a moment.”

He decided to act at a critical juncture. There was no need to take unnecessary risks at this point.

At that moment, a mellow, deep voice responded to Gardner Martin, “Where’s the president of your Iron and Blood Cross Order?”

“Headed there, of course,” Gardner Martin replied with a smile. “It’s the stage for important figures, and we have our own mission.”

He paused a beat before continuing, “Why are you still wearing the cloak? Is it someone new beneath?”

“You’re still as cautious as ever,” the deep voice sighed.

Lumian and Jenna heard the rustling of clothes.

Lumian immediately signaled Jenna with his eyes.

Jenna took the hint and recited the incantation silently, her hand resting on the mirror.

The aqueous light on the mirror’s surface flickered, revealing a figure.

The figure wore a cloak without the hood. His hair was thick and slightly curly, and his eyes were as sharp as an eagle’s. His beard was neatly trimmed, and the bridge of his nose was slightly raised.

Wh— Lumian recognized the person.

Philip!

The deceased General Philip!

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Chapter 475 - 475 Conspirer

475 Conspirer

Recognizing the black-cloaked man as the late General Philip, a surge of realization struck Lumian's mind, cutting through the darkness.

He connected various dots and reevaluated details he had previously deemed a stretch.

Earlier, Lumian had queried Gardner Martin about his support for Hugues Artois, the spokesperson of numerous evil gods. Martin asserted that he was well aware of Artois's nature and the sinister forces backing him. Martin endorsed Artois for parliament with the belief that he would repeatedly bring calamity to the market district, compelling citizens and workers to rally behind the Iron and Blood Cross Order, preparing for a future government overthrow.

Until today, Lumian had accepted this reasoning on the surface. Even if Martin hadn't disclosed the complete truth, he had unveiled a fraction of it. However, now it appeared that 90% of Martin's statement was a fabrication!

Hugues Artois had been groomed by the late General Philip and thrust into politics. Gardner Martin had clearly established a cooperative relationship with General Philip long ago. His backing of Hugues Artois wasn't merely an opportunistic exploit; rather, he had been intricately involved in the plan from the outset!

Similarly, General Philip, having feigned his death and diverged from his intended fate, utilized the Dreamseekers charity organization to finance Painters and other evil god-bestowed. Simultaneously, he joined the Carbonari, fomenting riots and rebellions. Lumian found this not entirely surprising, but the connection with Gardner Martin and the Iron and Blood Cross Order added an intriguing layer to the details.

By the time the Hostel ritual officially commenced, Lumian had already grasped the essence of this conspiracy. Yet, some explanations seemed a bit forced. For instance, how had Meyer Maipú, having left the Bliss Society in frustration and returned to the market district to prove himself, managed to contact the Painters or the evil gods' bestowed planning the Hostel ritual?

One plausible explanation was that Susanna—while still the high priestess of the Bliss Society—had established connections with other cults before her demise. As Maipú Meyer's lover and a crucial member of the Bliss Society, he should have had some contacts. However, upon closer scrutiny, it felt a tad contrived. Did Maipú Meyer truly maintain good relationships with believers of other evil gods?

Would he naturally seek their aid when confronting challenges to prove himself?

Despite Maipú Meyer's knowledge of an Angel sealed within Lumian's body, he couldn't fathom exploiting this information beyond offering sacrifices. Unless the Mother Tree of Desire bestowed a revelation directly, why wouldn't the Recipient, potentially having received a divine revelation, flaunt it? Why face ostracism from other Bliss Society members?

Lumian found that all the details made more sense now that Gardner Martin and his connection to General Philip were revealed as part of the conspiracy.

Following the Tree of Shadow disaster, Gardner Martin tasked Lumian, Franca, and their subordinates in the market district with investigating the incident and Hugues Artois's assassination. However, he would undoubtedly gather information about the Bliss Society's actions, mistakes, and issues through General Philip.

In these circumstances, Maipú Meyer, seeking a return to the market district, naturally established a connection with General Philip, who had shown interest in such matters, and provided crucial information. Consequently, Gardner Martin had long been aware of what was sealed within Lumian.

The entire Hostel ritual might have been conceived by him, General Philip, and the Painters.

One of them harbored a longstanding desire for Fourth Epoch Trier and possessed extensive knowledge of secrets and mysticism. They understood the seal's operation and its past leaks. Salle de Bal Brise, owned by the Savoie Mob, and 13 Avenue du Marché served as a testing ground for the Iron and Blood Cross Order's new members.

The other had a deep connection to the domain of fate. Through the financial support of the Dreamseekers charity organization, he had united many cults, accumulating vast knowledge in various aspects.

The reason why Hugues Artois had numerous evil gods' bestowed protecting him wasn't merely due to his ability to interact with problematic individuals or the deeply ingrained "enlightened" perception he had on others. Instead, it was because his backer, General Philip, a veteran of large-scale wars, had long been dedicated to cooperating with heretics to achieve a crucial goal.

Lumian suspected that Gardner Martin hadn't officially tested him and allowed him to join the Iron and Blood Cross Order out of initial trust. Instead, he had finalized the Hostel plan and decided to keep Lumian under close watch, exerting various influences and manipulating him.

If the Tarot Club hadn't intervened and the ritual hadn't been hastily advanced, it was highly likely that Gardner Martin or a demigod of the Iron and Blood Cross Order would have been the one to ultimately confront Lumian and transport him into the painting world to activate the ritual!

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian's understanding became clear.

Everything Gardner Martin had undertaken since the Tree of Shadow disaster was geared towards the Hostel ritual!

As expected of a former or current Conspirer… Lumian sighed sincerely.

Certainly, Gardner Martin might not have been aware of the residual aura of Blood Emperor Alista Tudor that Lumian carried, but he likely harbored suspicions. However, he couldn't fathom the core issue. After all, he was aware that an Angel was sealed within Lumian Lee's body, a walking anomaly bound to attract attention.

Regarding whether Gardner Martin knew about another organization backing him and Franca, Lumian believed that Martin had sensed something awry, but the precise details remained elusive. Even Maipú Meyer, not present at the Tree of Shadow ritual, was unaware of the events during that time.

Lumian signaled Jenna to cease the mirror magic to evade detection by Gardner Martin and General Philip. Meanwhile, he pondered.

Why does the Iron and Blood Cross Order covet Fourth Epoch Trier so intensely, going to such lengths in preparation? What is their ultimate goal?

If I hadn't arrived in Trier, stayed at Auberge du Coq Doré, and attracted the Fallen Tree Spirit Susanna Mattise, what would have been the original plan of the Iron and Blood Cross Order and the various cults? How did they intend to bypass the seal and unlock the door to Fourth Epoch Trier?

As the latter question surfaced, Lumian recalled something.

Gardner Martin had once directed "Rat" Christo's smuggling caravan to transport an item into Trier through an underground tunnel. This item activated the special mirror world hidden underground. Later, Franca sensed that item while tracking the black-cloaked Carbonari member, General Philip, who had faked his death…

Now, General Philip had also entered this place, suspected to be Fourth Epoch Trier!

They had made extensive preparations, including orchestrating a massive riot. Their goal was to use that item and its connection to the mirror fragments in the wilderness to infiltrate this place through the seal leak that once appeared beneath Salle de Bal Brise. Later, they had a better choice—me…

Dammit! Gardner Martin's words about why he supported Hugues Artois's election as a member of parliament were mostly true! He did need such a person to incite public anger in the market district, not to overthrow the government, but to satisfy the ritual!

Heh heh, pushing villains into power while posing as the leader of the resistance. He's both the antagonist and the protagonist. He's truly extracting the value from all the people in the market district dry… Lumian reacquainted himself with the

Sequence name “Conspirer” through Gardner Martin.

At that moment, Jenna grasped Lumian’s meaning and discontinued the mirror magic.

Gardner Martin smiled and said, “It’s indeed you, Philip. Let’s enter Fourth Epoch Trier.”

Philip… Jenna, who had only a vague impression of General Philip’s photo from the shadows, now realized that the cloaked man Franca had been trailing was General Philip, the one who had faked his death.

Philip’s deep, mellow voice resounded.

“Aren’t you going to find Lumian Lee? If he becomes your loyal subordinate and joins your team, you can immediately complete the ritual, consume the potion, and advance to a demigod.”

Gardner Martin sighed and responded, “I find it a pity too. An Angel is sealed within him, and he alone is a team. I’ve given him many chances, but he never understood what loyalty meant. Now, I have an alternative. Let him perish naturally in Fourth Epoch Trier.”

An Angel sealed within him? Jenna’s eyes widened as she looked at Lumian.

Lumian smirked and scoffed at Gardner Martin’s words.

I’d be a fool to believe you!

The person scheming to use me from the start talking about loyalty and pity?

Just as Gardner Martin and General Philip turned around to walk toward the magnificent city, two figures emerged from a mirror fragment in the nearby wilderness.

It was Franca, dressed in a blouse, beige white breeches, a small dark brown coat, and black leather boots, along with Anthony Reid, clad in military green.

Franca scanned the surroundings and spotted Gardner Martin, encased in full-body silver armor with his visor raised.

Anthony Reid’s gaze locked onto General Philip’s face, featuring a prominent bulge on his nose.

The eight eyes met, and the air momentarily froze.

…

Count Poufer’s figure materialized at the edge of the wilderness, in front of the pale-black stone bricks.

Gazing at the giant shrouded in storms, lightning, flames, and smoke, standing dozens of meters tall, he sprinted over with the fanatical expression of a sacrificial lamb.

It was Vermonda Sauron, who had lost control and gone underground.

The former Archangel, the Conqueror, who was very close to a deity's throne!

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Chapter 476 - 476 Calamity Giant

476 Calamity Giant

Count Poufer charged through the tempest, battling fierce winds, drenching rain, and bolts of lightning. Meanwhile, the Pixie in the distinctive blue beret—the overseer of the Hostel, positioned near the shroud of darkness around Salle de Bal Brise—took advantage of the moment and slipped through the enigmatic iron-colored door.

Fully aware of the peril awaiting her inside, she felt compelled by the will of a deity. Even the prospect of death didn't daunt her. It would only earn her the deity's favor and a return to the eternal realm of fantasy.

Regrettably, upon her arrival, she found herself suspended in the midst of the raging storm, amidst smoke and flames.

The colossal figure was clearly reflected in her eyes.

It resembled a horrifying charred giant, its once-fleshy exterior now absent. The charred metal skeleton, engulfed in blazing purple flames, formed what seemed like an intact body, but cracks riddled its structure. Continuously emanating illusory symbols—lightning, hail, fog—the majestic purple flames and the iron-black metal skeleton held inscrutable knowledge, representing countless real phenomena.

Drip, drip. Blood-hued, magma-like pus oozed from the cracks, transforming into black purple flames and various weather phenomena midair.

Witnessing this, the Pixie in the blue beret combusted from within.

Instinctive fear flashed in her eyes as she desperately reached into the void, entering an intangible state.

Yet, her physical form did not change for the better.

With a swift whoosh, every cell in the Pixie's being ignited, including the translucent dragonfly-like wings on her back.

After enduring agonizing contortions, she metamorphosed into a Pixie crafted from crimson flames. Lifeless eyes stared out from her now-empty gaze.

Within the fiery dragonfly wings, the altered Pixie danced around the giant's figure, as if escorting him.

Rumble!

Count Poufer was struck by bolts of lightning, and nearby, purple flames erupted.

Drenched in the relentless rain, enduring hailstones that battered him until he bled, he persevered through the thick smoke.

Perhaps due to the Sauron family's bloodline coursing through him, he remained unaffected by the surrounding chaos.

As the smoke cleared and the storm abated, Poufer eagerly gazed at the towering giant, dozens of meters tall.

Within the iron-black skull and amidst the purple flames, a distorted face of pain intermittently flickered.

The face bore some resemblance to Poufer, except its eyes, weathered and blood-black, were deathly still and vacant.

Upon spotting the giant, Count Poufer also ignited in flames.

Excruciating pain wracked him, yet his gaze remained fixed on the giant's face.

Amidst the encircling purple flames, faces filled with venom, hatred, and madness, as if cursing all living beings, alternated. Men and women, bearing a resemblance to both the giant and Count Poufer, emerged on the surface of withered hearts floating in the flames.

Poufer glimpsed the family's forebears from the oil paintings. Despite the difficulty, his mouth curled up, his face contorted by the flames.

In the turmoil, he transformed into a flaming pixie as well. However, instead of circling the rampaging giant, he was drawn by his family's bloodline into the perilous purple flames on the iron-black head, into Vermonda's face that flickered in and out.

In an instant, the two fused.

Vermonda's mouth twitched, a hint of liveliness in his eyes.

He opened his mouth and let out a scream filled with destructive desire and madness.

With this scream, the ground, scorched by the purple flames, shook dramatically, and earth puppets crawled out.

These puppets—equally tall at three to four meters tall, charred with an iron hue—were speckled with dark-red blood.

Transforming as they squirmed, the earth puppets became soldiers, guarding the area with a semblance of life.

Almost simultaneously, a fiery meteor descended from the heavens.

Streaking across the sky, it plummeted towards the edge of the fog.

Bang!

A figure emerged amidst the meteorite-like crash and ensuing tremors, standing upright.

It was Snarner Einhorn, adorned in iron-black, blood-stained armor.

The 1.8-meter-tall Angel, with long dark-red hair and flamboyant earrings, didn't hesitate. His body expanded, unveiling a Mythical Creature form reminiscent of Vermonda Sauron's current state.

It was a giant, a representation of calamity, crafted from flames and various symbolic elements.

…

Under the silent blaze of invisible flames in the sky, across the wilderness, Pualis de Roquefort, draped in an elegant black dress and a veiled hat, fixed her gaze on the majestic city not far away.

She didn't get her husband, butler, and children to enter the Hostel. Instead, she arranged for them to temporarily depart Trier and reside in a suburban town beyond the city wall.

After a brief survey, Madame Pualis turned her attention to the man merely 20 to 30 meters away.

Despite appearing in his fifties, his dense blond hair showed only slight traces of gray, and his lake-blue eyes were clear.

Neatly encircling his mouth, the beard framed his unusually deep facial features. It was evident he had been a handsome man in his youth.

He was the Circle Inhabitant of the Sinners, Voisin Sanson!

Roche Louis Sanson's father.

Madame Pualis shifted her gaze back to the seemingly boundless city, sensing an inexplicable calling from somewhere. It was gradually contracting and expanding, akin to the embrace of a long-forgotten mother.

She took a step forward.

…

Franca hadn’t anticipated encountering Gardner Martin immediately upon exiting the mirror world.

As an undercover agent for both the Tarot Club and the Demoness Sect, she felt a twinge of guilt instinctively. The urge to casually greet him with a “what a coincidence” surfaced subconsciously. However, she was no longer the naive rookie from her initial transmigration. Her worldly and combat experiences ranked among the elite in the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. Swiftly reacting, she yelled at Anthony Reid, “Duck,” and, turning invisible, lunged to the side.

Almost simultaneously, dozens, perhaps hundreds, of blazing white fireballs materialized around Gardner Martin. His eyes were profound, body clad in silver armor, as the fireballs howled and erupted at the previous location of Franca and Anthony Reid.

Anthony, his gaze fixed on General Philip’s black-cloaked figure, heard Franca’s warning, “duck,” echoing in his ears.

Experienced, though unsure of what to expect, he followed his teammate’s advice. Adjusting his body mid-air, he kicked down with both feet, hurtling toward General Philip without picking a side.

Amidst the explosive chaos, General Philip was astonished to find a slightly greasy middle-aged man in military-green camouflage clothing glaring at him with hatred, launching towards him.

Does he hold a grudge against me? Philip wondered, his eyes darkening as focus slipped away.

He “saw” a myriad of intertwined fates and discerned the threads’ approximate origins.

So, you’re a survivor of the sacrificial company… Lucky enough to escape back then, and now you dare return for revenge? General Philip sneered with disdain.

As a Sequence 5 Reaper of the Hunter pathway, he made the decision to put his faith in the great Goddess of Fate and receive the corresponding boon. This choice stemmed from his firsthand recognition of the limitations and issues within his original pathway in the mysticism domain, along with the impending apocalypse he couldn’t avoid.

His aim was clear—to swiftly ascend to demigod status, securing the protection of a mighty existence to endure the impending apocalypse. Ordinary channels simply couldn’t provide him with what he needed.

Despite the initial weaknesses and constraints of the Goddess of Fate’s pathway, he accepted it without hesitation.

It was worth noting that the boon corresponding to Sequence 9, Dreamless, merely granted him a dreamless state and the ability to sense the flow of fate. Consequently, he forfeited the potential of gaining revelations through his spirituality via dreams.

Sequence 8 Musicians were a slight improvement. In certain worlds, Musicians often blinded themselves to enhance their focus on the voice of fate before playing it like a symphony. However, this method demanded extensive preparation and sufficient time to orchestrate the tune in order to influence a target's fate.

As for Sequence 7 Fate Pryers, they shared essential similarities with Seers. However, unlike Seers, they didn't require a medium to directly perceive or hear the revelations of fate.

By Sequence 6, the bestowed of the Goddess of Fate finally acquired relatively potent abilities. Those who glimpsed fate could convey it and directly impact a target, but each usage came with a significant drawback—a self-imposed silence lasting for an extended period.

This Sequence was known as Mute.

Only after faking his death and breaking free from his original fate did the Sequence 5 Deceased no longer bear the previous restrictions. They could now function relatively normally.

As a dual Sequence 5, General Philip unraveled the threads of fate, discerning the origin of Anthony Reid's animosity. He chuckled, releasing a voice that seemed confined for an eternity.

"Fate can't be avoided. You'll ultimately end up as my sacrifice."

Amidst these words and the explosive tumult, Anthony Reid's mind replayed the harrowing scene of the camp attack, causing him to break out into a tremble.

Thud! He landed on the ground and clutched his head in fear.

Not far away, concealed behind a half-collapsed grayish-white stone pillar, Lumian and Jenna both heard Franca's urgent cry to "duck."

Franca has entered too? How did she do it? Lumian wondered, a sense of alarm coursing through him.

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Chapter 477 - 477 Frenzy

477 Frenzy

Lumian felt a brief moment of surprise before taking a shot in the dark.

The why and what of it didn't matter now. Those questions could wait until after dealing with Gardner Martin and General Philip or finding a way to slip past them. There might be a chance to escape this place.

At the fringes of the wilderness, Gardner Martin's attempts to flush out Franca from her invisibility failed, even after a series of explosions.

His former lover had vanished to some unknown spot.

Being a Demoness of Pleasure, Franca relied on her Assassin abilities, leaving no footprints, masking her scent and spiritual aura. It made her a formidable challenge to track, countering a Hunter's knack for gathering environmental intel.

Gardner Martin, donned in silver-white full-body armor, kept on the move. Familiar with the Demoness pathway's traits and abilities, he knew that, having ascended to Pleasure, Franca didn't need blood, hair, or nails for her curses. Reflecting him into mirrors and enveloping him in black flames would do the trick. He couldn't stand still for more than three seconds, to prevent himself from being reflected in the mirror.

As he swiftly maneuvered, Gardner Martin glanced at Philip and Anthony, the information broker. He noticed the latter lying on the ground, clutching his head and trembling. Anthony sporadically used Placate on himself, resigning from resistance. Philip's black cloak expanded slightly, and crimson, nearly white flaming ravens materialized beside him, as if preparing for a grand sacrifice.

Observing the scene, Gardner Martin paid no heed to the ongoing battle. He raised his right hand and lowered his visor.

A broadsword, aglow with condensed light, materialized in Gardner Martin's grip, casting a radiant and holy Sunrise Gleam over a vast expanse. Its brilliance dispelled illusions, compelling shadows to retreat and revealing Franca's ponytailed form more than ten meters behind him.

This was the power of a Sequence 6 Dawn Paladin of the Warrior pathway.

The power emanated from Gardner Martin's silver armor, a numbered Sealed Artifact bestowed by the authorities. He had acquired it in an operation a few years back, slaying two Purifiers of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church and claiming

the armor from their fallen bodies.

“Number: 247.

“Name: Pride Armor.

“Danger Grade: 2. Dangerous. Use with care and moderation. It can only be applied for operations that require more than three people, or by deacons and diocesan bishops.

“Security classification: Official Purifiers and above.

“Sealing Method: Place it in a dark chamber and select physically strong humans to guard them with a rotation every three hours.

“Description: Late into the war between the Loen Kingdom and the Feysac Empire, a plethora of meteors descended from the sky, causing widespread catastrophes.

“This armor was discovered in a ruined building in the suburbs of Port LeSeur. The humans inside had met a brutal end.

“Through experimentation, it bestows upon the wearer the might of a giant. It blankets an area of 48 meters in Sunrise Gleam. These rays dispel illusions, erase shadows, and nullify invisibility effects. They also affect Wraiths and Shadows, diminishing their peculiarities and even weakening evil spirits.

“It possesses decent defensive capabilities and can be damaged but regenerates slowly. Depending on the extent of the damage, recovery can range from half an hour to a day. For detailed data, refer to Appendix 2.

“The wearer’s combat skills see a significant boost, accompanied by heightened arrogance. They hold disdain for those standing behind them and targets concealed in the darkness or invisible.

“The criteria for determining one’s physique are inconsistent, sometimes very high, sometimes low. Initial findings suggest a correlation with the armor’s condition and the surrounding environment. Most humans with regular exercise or those who rely on potions to enhance their physique pass the assessment without incident. For exceptions, it was later discovered they suffered from undetected serious illnesses or indulged excessively in the past two days.

“No matter who you are, caution is warranted when positioned behind this armor, though attacks don’t always occur.

“Similarly, the wearer is vulnerable to its attacks when using other mystical items. Experimental results show heightened reactions when facing items from the Evernight pathway and the Earth pathway.

“The wearer of the armor eventually experiences varying degrees of betrayal, irrespective of whether they still wear the item.

“At night, this armor is very quiet, exhibiting minimal aggressiveness. However, under a moonlit sky, its demeanor becomes notably irritable, reaching maximal offensiveness.

“The highest level of experimental subjects is Sequence 5…

“Appendix 1: The wearer of the armor grows taller to varying degrees. Multiple wearings do not stack.

“Appendix 2…”

Under the influence of the Sealed Artifact, 2—247, Franca materialized.

Gardner Martin, wearing a visor, hesitated briefly before slashing with the radiant broadsword in his hand.

Simultaneously, a multitude of crimson, nearly white Fire Ravens condensed around him.

Surrounded by crimson Fire Ravens, General Philip locked eyes with the prone Anthony Reid. With a slight lift of his chin, he declared, “Accept your fate.”

Anthony sensed the imminent danger but found himself powerless to resist. Trembling, memories of that haunting night flooded his mind, making it difficult to put up any resistance.

However, as he recalled General Philip’s words about becoming a sacrifice, the tragic fate of his comrades, and the years of investigation, anger ignited within Anthony.

It’s him!

He’s the one responsible for harming my comrades, those rough but endearing individuals, and my companions who once had my back!

Suddenly, Lumian’s earlier question echoed in Anthony’s thoughts.

“Up to this day, do you still wrestle with the fear from that night, the sounds of sudden gunshots? Do you truly possess the courage and determination to press on?”

Anthony remembered his response:

“Perhaps I perished in that attack. What remains is an avenging spirit, relentless in its pursuit of truth and retribution.

“I can be destroyed, but I can’t give up…”

That’s right. I should have died long ago. My sole purpose in life is revenge. And today, my true enemy stands before me!

Why should I be afraid? I'm not even afraid of death. Why fear gunshots, explosions, or being a sacrifice?

This time, I chose to stay in Trier, not to flee from potential catastrophe but to make amends for my regrets.

Now, the opportunity has presented itself!

The flames of revenge roared within Anthony Reid's heart. He lifted his gaze to meet General Philip's slightly reddened, hatred-filled dark-brown eyes—once his superior's superior's superior.

Go to hell! Anthony cursed inwardly as he unleashed a Psychiatrist's Frenzy.

This ability could manipulate the emotions or destabilize the mental state of the target, pushing them into a frenzied state and inflicting severe mental damage.

In some cases, it could even lead the target to lose control.

Just as General Philip prepared to unleash a swarm of Fire Ravens, a surge of Danger Premonition hit him. Before he could react, the intended sacrifice raised his head, locking eyes with him, bloodshot dark-brown eyes burning with intensity.

With a buzzing sound, Philip's head snapped back, his thoughts thrown into disarray.

Ever since embracing the Goddess of Fate, originally being a Sequence 5, he, armed with the corresponding knowledge, could keenly sense shifts in his personality and thoughts. His body had undergone gradual changes as the power of the boons increased.

For Philip, mentally prepared as he was, this was acceptable. One concern nagged at him—his mental state had become unpredictable. Sometimes rational, sometimes fanatical, sometimes cold, and sometimes calm. His behavior was capricious.

It mirrored those great existences.

General Philip's mind felt like a storm had been unleashed within it. His facial skin swelled, and his pale-white hair crinkled, resembling someone submerged in water for days.

Invisible threads materialized from each pore, tinged with a faint mercurial hue, giving Philip's flesh the appearance of being ablaze with flames.

General Philip briefly succumbed to Frenzy.

At that moment, a figure materialized behind him.

It was Lumian, dressed in a partially tucked white shirt, brown pants, and oil painting-like black leather shoes.

Recognizing Franca's voice and sensing the onset of the battle, Lumian didn't immediately rush out to provide assistance. Instead, he opted to wait for the right opportunity.

Aware that his current spirituality dictated a single optimal choice, Lumian needed to eliminate either Gardner Martin or General Philip swiftly. Franca, Jenna, and Anthony could then join forces to handle the remaining adversary.

Choosing a target was no easy decision for Lumian.

Gardner Martin, corrupted by 13 Avenue du Marché and the Commanding Officer of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, possessed numerous peculiarities. Lumian couldn't guarantee that a combination of punches would conclusively finish him. General Philip, with his boon involving fate, might sense danger ahead of time, making Lumian's surprise attack unlikely to succeed.

Both options carried substantial risks, forcing Lumian to exercise restraint and wait patiently.

As long as Franca and Anthony remained alive for the time being, Lumian would hold back.

Patience was a fundamental quality of a Hunter, equally crucial for a Conspirer.

However, Lumian's waiting wasn't blind. Relying on Jenna's mirror magic and the shattered mirrors in the wilderness, he observed the situation closely. Prepared to intervene and save Anthony, Lumian found the opportune moment when Anthony turned the tables on Philip with a Frenzy.

This was an opportunity!

Lumian gazed at General Philip, struggling in his frenzied state, and coldly exclaimed, "Hmph!"

Two beams of white light shot out and struck Philip.

The Deceased's eyes lost focus suddenly, and his body swayed, on the brink of collapse.

Lumian had already raised his right hand, bent his pinky and ring finger, and aimed at the back of General Philip's head, mimicking a revolver.

Bang! With an added sound effect in his mind and a slight lean backward, a crimson fireball rapidly compressed and shot out from the tips of his index and middle fingers, hurtling towards the target like a bullet.

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Chapter 478 - 478 The Mockery of Fate

478 The Mockery of Fate

Bang!

Philip's body disintegrated starting from the point of impact, as if a hammer had shattered a mirror reflecting his form.

Amidst the chaos concealed by the explosion, shards of glass scattered across the wilderness, joining the reflections of those already present.

Lumian's eyes widened as he observed the unexpected turn of events.

Does the Deceased pathway also possess Mirror Substitution?

Or does General Philip wield a mystical item from the Demoness pathway?

Such thoughts raced through Lumian's mind as he processed the scene. Philip's black-cloaked figure swiftly reappeared more than ten meters away. His eyes, once frenzied, now regained clarity.

Simultaneously, Jenna, disguised as a female mercenary, materialized from invisibility behind General Philip. She aimed her revolver at the Deceased, who had narrowly escaped the fatal attack and negative state.

To be honest, Jenna found herself in a perplexing and shocking situation.

The revelation that General Philip possessed Mirror Substitution didn't catch her off guard. However, she hadn't processed the implications before realizing he had "chosen" to position himself right before her, as if anticipating her to backstab him.

Originally, Jenna had devised a plan to exploit Lumian's clash with General Philip. Her intention was to utilize Invisibility, slip away from her hiding spot, and reach the wilderness's edge. Her goal: to assist Franca, cast a curse if Lumian's strike fell short, or create a frosty hindrance on the ground. Unexpectedly, General Philip had "escaped" to a location directly in front of her.

Such a golden opportunity couldn't be ignored!

Confused by the unfolding events, Jenna instinctively raised her right hand, aiming her revolver at the back of General Philip's head.

Though unsure of the reasons behind this bizarre turn of events, she suspected it was connected to the lucky gold coin she had received from Will.

Bang!

Jenna squeezed the trigger, and a yellow bullet, wreathed in black flames, shot out from the muzzle, hurtling toward General Philip's skull.

Meanwhile, Franca emerged from the radiant Sunrise Gleam, witnessing Anthony Reid overcoming his fear to employ his abilities on General Philip. Lumian had for some reason arrived in the vicinity, appearing mysteriously behind Philip.

Without time to dwell on her surprise, Franca swiftly raised her brass classic revolver and fired an iron-black bullet at Gardner Martin, who wielded his broadsword of light.

Her strategy was clear—unleash her full strength to stall Gardner Martin and deny him the opportunity to save General Philip!

Franca's decision to use invisibility wasn't about tapping into Assassin tactics to backstab her ex-lover. Drawing on her battle experience, she instinctively chose invisibility for a different purpose—to escape Gardner Martin and General Philip's sight, gaining a brief moment of safety.

Finally, she withdrew the Cannon Gun from her underarm holster, clasping it firmly in her palm.

Bang!

As the iron-black bullet sped toward Gardner Martin, Franca's diamond necklace on her chest emitted a faint glow.

Simultaneously, Franca's eyes welled up, and her red lips parted slightly, amplifying the allure of a Demoness of Pleasure.

Gardner Martin's body suddenly heated up, feeling his blood rush to his nether regions.

Scenes of his past entanglement with Franca flooded his mind, captivated by the Demoness's uncanny demeanor amidst iron and blood.

His eyes reddened, breathing grew labored, and movements visibly slowed.

Lust!

From Beatrice's Necklace and the lust of the Mother Tree of Desire pathway, coupled with the charm of a Demoness of Pleasure, it had a synergistic effect greater than the sum of its parts.

Moreover, Gardner Martin wasn't a stranger to such experiences. He had always agreed with the words in Emperor Roselle's Secret Chronicles: "The taste of a Demoness ain't bad." In this situation, how could he control himself after tasting a Demoness?

Clang! The iron-black bullet struck Gardner Martin's chest, causing cracks in his silver armor.

Franca, not surprised that the attack hadn't worked, realized in her haste, she hadn't activated the Heavy Strike effect of the Cannon Gun.

The brass revolver, a mystical item purchased from the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, wasn't particularly potent or mystical; it had two simple abilities. The first, a normal shot, equivalent to a rifle, and the second, a Heavy Strike, akin to a small cannonball or a sniper rifle.

Franca always carried it to compensate for a Demoness's lack of offensive capabilities when she couldn't use a curse. The Cannon Gun's negative effects were minimal—if all six rounds were not fired in a day or maintained every other week, rare situations like chamber explosions or misfires could occur.

Observing Gardner Martin's infatuated gaze behind the visor, Franca hesitated before using her right thumb to pull back the Cannon Gun's hammer, signaling the activation of the Heavy Strike effect.

Bang!

As Franca moved, she pulled the trigger at Gardner Martin, who lunged at her as if seeking a mate.

The iron-black bullet collided with him, accompanied by blazing flames.

Almost simultaneously, Franca sensed an anomaly in the Primordial Demoness figurine casually stuffed into her pocket.

Not only did it turn cold again, like ice, but it also trembled slightly.

Dammit! Why is it you again? Are you done!? Franca, feeling both angry and cautious, pulled the trigger and threw the palm-sized bone figurine far away.

Simultaneously, on the other side, Jenna's bullet, fired from an ordinary revolver, pierced the back of General Philip's head with black flames. Unsurprisingly, the Deceased shattered like a mirror, his figure outlined at the edge of the Sunrise Gleam created by Gardner Martin.

At that moment, as Franca hurled the Primordial Demoness's bone figurine, General Philip's body froze.

Black flames erupted, silently igniting his Spirit Body. Cold frost swiftly condensed, enveloping him.

The mirror he carried appeared to have shattered.

He was clearly in a daze, as if he had been cursed.

Without hesitation, Lumian employed Spirit World Traversal once more, emerging from behind General Philip.

Meanwhile, Anthony Reid had stood up, his expression no longer filled with fear but focused hatred.

As Philip was not far from him, on the edge of the clear Sunrise Gleam, he ran towards the general—his mortal enemy.

Philip's figure reflected in his eyes, and he couldn't help but smile.

His pupils turned vertical, tinged with a faint golden hue.

This time, he refrained from employing Frenzy, fearing it might cause General Philip to lose control and transform, giving Gardner Martin an opportunity to kill his team.

He chose Awe, also known as Dragon Might!

General Philip trembled.

Under normal circumstances, he wouldn't have succumbed to such a severe Awe. At most, he would have experienced temporary fear. However, he was in a dire state, influenced by an unknown force, betrayed by an item on him. Consequently, his entire being fell into a blank state.

Observing this, Lumian refrained from using the Spell of Harrumph. His right hand took the shape of a revolver again, aimed at the back of General Philip's head, and fired a crimson fireball that was nearly white from his fingertips.

Philip was jolted awake by a tangible premonition of danger, only to witness his impending demise.

A wave of indignation washed over him.

Despite being stronger, possessing lethal strikes, and an array of mystical abilities, he suffered a relentless beating without a chance to retaliate. He didn't even have an opportunity to fight back before Death knocked on his door.

In his eyes, countless fates interwove into a net, constantly changing, as if mocking him.

This made him feel like a clown.

Bang!

General Philip's head exploded from Lumian's crimson, nearly white fireball. Numerous skull fragments splattered with charred marks, red blood, and milky-white brain matter.

The Deceased's lifeless body thudded to the ground, and an item rolled out of the hidden pocket of the black cloak.

It was a pitch-black figurine, palm-sized and resembling a beautiful woman. Long snake-like hair cascaded to its feet, and it had eyes of various forms at the top.

Wh— Lumian's gaze instinctively shifted to the Primordial Demoness figurine that Franca had thrown out.

Similar to the one on General Philip, one was pure white, while the other was pitch-black.

Suddenly, Lumian grasped why General Philip had Mirror Substitution and why he had appeared directly in front of Jenna, who was invisible.

With the special Primordial Demoness figurine, he naturally converged with Demonesses!

Subsequently, Franca's official Primordial Demoness figurine resonated with the pitch-black one, causing an abnormality that led to General Philip being "cursed" by the item at a critical moment.

The pitch-black Primordial Demoness figurine was likely the item Gardner Martin had smuggled into Trier through "Rat" Christo's smuggling caravan!

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Chapter 479 - 479 Matching Items

Chapter 479 Matching Items

Bang!

The jet-black bullet, ablaze with fiery fury, slammed into Gardner Martin, who was gripped by desire, dead center in his gleaming silver armor once again.

It hit him like a battering ram, sending shockwaves through his frame.

A web of fractures sprawled out from the impact zone, causing Gardner Martin's advance to stagger, forcing him to lean backward.

This abrupt jolt snapped him out of his reverie. He witnessed General Philip, wreathed in black flames and encased in frost, while Lumian materialized behind the Deceased. Lumian's right hand acted as a revolver, launching a crimson fireball straight at the back of Philip's head.

Behind Gardner Martin's mask, his pupils dilated, and a shiver raced down his spine, as if an icy cascade had been dumped over him.

This abrupt awakening effectively quelled his desires. Without hesitation, he dropped to one knee and drove the hefty broadsword into the wilderness.

The broadsword shattered, breaking into myriad fragments of light that swept toward Franca, Lumian, and the others, including the lifeless form of General Philip.

Amidst a resounding crack, Franca, constantly shifting positions, remained enveloped by the Hurricane of Light, her body fracturing like a shattered mirror.

Lumian and Jenna met the same fate. Only Anthony Reid, lacking Mirror Substitution, instinctively lunged to the ground, curling up to shield his vital parts.

The luminous tempest rapidly dissipated before Lumian and his companions outlined themselves on the outskirts of the wilderness, facing the pale-black stone bricks.

They witnessed a brilliant white flaming spear hurtling towards the distant majestic city, covering more than a hundred meters in the blink of an eye.

As soon as the fiery-spear materialized upon impact with the ground, Gardner Martin, draped in silver armor, rose again, directing his focus towards the city veiled in a thin fog.

After several consecutive attempts, Gardner Martin distanced himself from Franca and the others, sprinting towards the dilapidated structures at the city's periphery.

Lumian chose not to pursue him. Instead, he sprinted to the edge of the Sunrise Gleam to check on Anthony Reid.

The Psychiatrist's body bore a multitude of bloody wounds, with the most severe on the left side of his back, revealing a glimpse of his beating heart.

Lying on his side, curled up and bloodied, Anthony Reid forced a smile upon seeing Lumian.

There was no fear of death in that smile—only relief, relaxation, and satisfaction.

The taste of revenge was indeed sweet.

Observing Anthony Reid's lips moving as if he intended to entrust something, Lumian scoffed and remarked, "Do you wish to utter your final words? Do you want us to dispatch your belongings to your home on the West Midseashire Coast?"

As he spoke, Lumian retrieved a silver earring, securing it to his left earlobe.

Squatting down, he pressed his left hand against the gaping wound on Anthony's back.

Abruptly, his palm slid upward, and the gruesome wound shifted to Anthony's shoulder.

In the blink of an eye, the most critical injury on Anthony's body vanished, leaving him as good as new. However, the initially minor wounds on his shoulder deepened, revealing white bones and causing blood to seep out.

This was Lie's Damage Transfer, capable of addressing one wound at a time.

Anthony was taken aback, feeling as if life had been restored to him.

Though the pain persisted, and his body weakened, at least the specter of imminent death had dissipated.

Then, Jenna approached, placing him in a supine position.

With a swift pfft, Jenna thrust an obsidian arrow into Anthony's chest.

The Arrow of the Bloodthirsty promptly absorbed the blood, turning Anthony's pupils red. The invisible flames in the sky seemed a bit blinding, and the scent of blood in the air proved enticing.

Simultaneously, the smaller wounds on his body swiftly healed, and the more severe ones showed significant improvement. In a matter of minutes, they should

close up on their own, ceasing to impede his movements.

Anthony Reid, teetering on the edge of death, stood up, bewildered, examining his body with disbelief.

I've nearly recovered? I'm alright just like that? As a Spectator, his emotions visibly fluctuated.

"Not a bad combination," Franca praised. "As long as you don't perish on the spot and refrain from losing control and transforming into a monster, there's still a chance to save you. At most, you'll become weakened."

Lie's Damage Transfer, coupled with the formidable self-healing abilities bestowed by the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty, produced such a remarkable effect.

Franca turned her gaze to Lumian, questioning, "I thought you'd intercept Gardner Martin."

In that critical moment, the others couldn't match Gardner Martin's speed as he fled. Only Lumian, capable of Spirit World Traversal, had the potential to catch up and effectively hinder him.

"Do you think I didn't want to?" Lumian retorted, a note of mockery in his tone.

However, he lacked the ability!

Had he not been affected by Voisin Sanson's Circle Inhabitant during his first "teleportation" today, returning him to his original spot without expending his spirituality, Lumian wouldn't have maintained a stable state. He wouldn't even have been able to use Lie for Damage Transfer. He would have had to rely on Franca or Jenna. How could he possibly have caught up to Gardner Martin?

Franca instantly grasped Lumian's meaning—he had engaged in battles before and after entering this place, and his spirituality was on the verge of depletion.

"Alright." Franca shifted her attention to the two Primordial Demoness figurines, one black and one white, lying undisturbed on the ground, untouched by the Hurricane of Light. Frowning, she inquired, "Where should I toss these two?"

Them constantly causing abnormalities seemed like a scam!

"Take them with you." Lumian considered for a moment before smiling. "If it weren't for them, how could we have dispatched General Philip so effortlessly? We might need them to escape in the future. Yes, we can't entrust both to one person. You take one, and Jenna will take the other."

After a brief pause, Franca responded, "I'll still take the white one."

As a member of the Demoness Sect, holding the orthodox Primordial Demoness figurine was only natural.

Observing Jenna pick up the pitch-black Primordial Demoness figurine, Franca muttered in confusion, “Why is there such a figurine? According to the Purifiers’ dossier and information from other secret organizations, members of the Demoness Sect only carry bone figurines. There’s nothing that’s so black.”

While Franca spoke, she scrutinized the charred Primordial Demoness bone figurine, comparing it with her own.

Soon, she discerned differences in the details.

Aside from the stark white and pitch-black hues, the eyes at the tips of the Primordial Demoness’s snake-like hair faced different directions. If one looked left, the other would undoubtedly look right.

“Like a mirror image, mirror… Is this the Primordial Demoness in the mirror?” Franca ventured a guess, amalgamating the abilities and traits of the Demoness pathway with her experience in the peculiar mirror world. “This shouldn’t be possible under normal circumstances. It wouldn’t be easy for the Iron and Blood Cross Order to find such a figurine…”

She now comprehended the reason behind their encounters with Gardner Martin and General Philip.

This was a manifestation of the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence. Except for Anthony, an unwitting Psychiatrist brought in by his companion, everyone present was either a Hunter or a Demoness.

Furthermore, Franca and Anthony had entered through the same method as General Philip. They would inevitably emerge at the edge of this wilderness, teeming with mirror fragments.

Primordial Demoness in the mirror… Lumian found the description ominous.

Without delay, he addressed Franca and the others, “Search General Philip’s corpse and help me guard the surroundings. I’ll set up a ritual to restore my spirituality.”

Jenna expressed surprise. “There’s a ritual that can restore spirituality?”

Her gaze naturally swept over General Philip’s corpse, realizing it had been split into five or six pieces, each a gruesome mess.

The Beyonder characteristics had yet to emerge at that moment. The boon from the evil god couldn’t return to its source, slowly sinking back into the lifeless form.

Lumian entered a dimly lit area with grayish-white stone pillars, found cover, and swiftly set up the altar. Franca could surmise who he was praying to, so she joined him to guard against any unforeseen incidents.

Jenna contemplated for a few seconds before approaching the altar. Retrieving the lucky gold coin, she said to Lumian, “This is the lucky gold coin that the boy gave me. I don’t know if it’s useful when given to others, but there’s no harm in trying.”

She delegated the task of searching the corpse to Anthony Reid, who was rapidly recovering.

Franca observed in silence for a moment before affirming, “True.”

Lumian didn’t hesitate. After all, Will had a close connection to the Tarot Club. Even if the lucky gold coin couldn’t be lent to others, it wouldn’t bring about any negative effects.

Placing the Loen gold pound on the altar, Lumian conjured a wall of spirituality, ignited all the candles, and took two steps back.

Rather than proceeding with the boon-seeking ritual, he attempted to recite Mr. Fool’s honorific name.

“The Fool that doesn’t belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck…”

As Hermes reverberated, the lucky gold coin on the altar illuminated. A thin gray fog emanated from the wall of spirituality, enveloping the wilderness’s periphery.

The fog in the distant majestic city appeared to thicken.

Before long, just as Lumian began praying for a boon, a frenzied and terrifying roar echoed from the area where the weather was chaotic and faint giant figures lingered.

Despite the thin gray fog, the four of them felt dizzy. The blood in their bodies raced, and their hearts pounded.

“It’s truly useful. It’s genuinely lucky…” Lumian gazed at the dazzling golden coin on the altar, sighing sincerely.

Had it not been for the ritual and Mr. Fool’s gray fog’s protection, the roar could have inflicted severe damage, especially considering Lumian’s nearly depleted spirituality. He might have lost control, putting Anthony Reid, still recovering from severe injuries, in jeopardy.

Phew… Lumian exhaled and continued to recite in a deep voice under the watchful eyes of Franca and Jenna, “Power of Inevitability!

“You are the past, the present, and the future;

“You are the cause, the effect, and the process…”

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Chapter 480 - 480 Ascetic

Chapter 480 Ascetic

Amidst the frenzied and terrifying roars, a hurricane tore through the abnormally chaotic weather, shrouding the scene in smoke, flames, lightning, and hail. It spiraled into the sky, merging with the silent inferno.

Not far from the apocalypse-like hurricane, two figures felt the impact of the roar simultaneously. One's head tilted back slightly, as if punched, while the other's wrinkles quivered, and his eyes grew sharper.

The former was the man who had originally stood behind Olson, vice president of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, Tony Twain. The latter was aged, donning a blue military suit with a sash and medals. His neatly combed back dark-red hair identified him as the mysterious president of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, known as Diest.

Diest shifted his gaze from the hurricane to Tony Twain.

"The chance to become a Conqueror is before us. If I can seize it, I'll find a way to separate the Weather Warlock's Beyonder characteristic and bestow it upon you."

As Tony Twain observed the violent hurricane, lightning, and torrential rain, his light-blue eyes hinted at mockery.

"Can we really succeed? A Weather Warlock has already joined. Even if Vermonda Sauron loses control and transforms into a monster, he's still a Sequence 1 monster."

Tony Twain's words showed no respect for a Sequence 2 Weather Warlock or a Sequence 1 Conqueror, despite not being an Angel yet.

Diest's expression remained unchanged, and his aura surged.

With his military attire, he resembled the commander-in-chief of all armies.

"Elsewhere, we'll surely fail. Even without interference, we'll need to embark on a lengthy hunt to stand a chance against the out-of-control Vermonda Sauron. But here…" Diest spoke in a deep voice, "We can harness that power for a brief period."

As he finished speaking, the area between his brows turned red, as if something sought to emerge.

Simultaneously, Diest retrieved a coin pouch from his waist, concealed beneath his suit.

Filled with soybeans and a few palm-sized iron soldiers, Diest grabbed them and tossed them forward.

Amidst the howling wind, the iron soldiers sprang to life and expanded. The soybeans swelled rapidly, transforming into giants with blurred faces and yellowish skin, as if soaked in water.

Failing to bring his team here in time, Diest abruptly transformed into a blazing dark-red, nearly purple flame, engulfing the newly created soldiers.

A beam of light shot up, tearing through the sky and homing in on the giant figure within the hurricane.

…

At the edge of the magnificent city veiled in a thin gray fog, Gardner Martin removed his helmet. His breastplate bore web-like cracks, revealing blood-stained clothes beneath.

With one hand pressed against his head, he staggered forward, intermittently emitting crimson flames bordering on white.

The terrifying roar had clearly taken its toll.

Navigating through the ruins, Gardner Martin quickly approached the thin gray fog. Half-collapsed asymmetrical buildings stood within, seemingly frozen in time, struck by a devastating blow and sunk into the ground.

Abruptly halting, Gardner Martin glanced to the side and asked in a deep voice, “Who is it?”

Amidst the sound of gravel tumbling, Olson, resembling a hungry bear, emerged from behind a collapsed black building, carrying a small brown suitcase.

The Supervisor, sporting a half top hat, yellow vest, and black suit, looked at Gardner Martin and said, “I didn’t know who was coming, so I hid for a while. Where’s Philip?”

Gardner Martin breathed a sigh of relief and replied, “We encountered Lumian Lee and his team. They killed Philip. I was injured and barely managed to escape.”

Olson, with his thick beard, didn’t delve into the details of the battle and sized up Gardner Martin. “You’re quite beaten up.”

Gardner Martin chuckled, saying,

“Fortunately, I had Pride Armor to shield me from most of the damage. Yeah, I blame it mainly on the angelic roar; it affected me to a certain extent. Fortunately, I was relatively far away, so the problem isn’t that serious. Look, even the Pride Armor hasn’t attacked me, indicating that I haven’t weakened.”

“That’s good. Let’s enter Fourth Epoch Trier now,” Supervisor Olson nodded with an indifferent expression.

Gardner Martin turned around, clutching the silver helmet with one arm, and walked towards the thin gray fog not far away.

Olson carried a small brown suitcase and trailed behind the Commanding Officer of the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

As the two advanced, Olson’s eyes suddenly turned fierce and vicious.

You’d used ‘fortunately’ twice… You’ve already taken off the Pride Armor’s helmet… Olson muttered silently to himself, his brownish-red eyes reflecting Gardner Martin’s staggering figure in the silver armor.

…

At the edge of the wilderness, scattered with mirror fragments, Franca and Jenna couldn’t hear the chants emanating from the wall of spirituality, but they observed the grayish-white stone pillar and two candles of the same color mysteriously softening. Fist-sized candle flames flickered in silver-white and black, while an illusory pewter-black liquid oozed from Lumian’s chest, enveloping him.

As Lumian curled up on the ground, occasionally rolling, Franca sighed softly and remarked, “It looks painful…”

This likely marked Ciel’s fourth encounter with such an ordeal.

“That’s right.” Despite standing outside the wall of spirituality, Jenna felt an inexplicable fear, goosebumps forming on her skin.

While she had witnessed Ciel’s mental pain and confusion, this was her first time witnessing such intense physical suffering.

Franca spoke sincerely, “If Ciel were to switch to the Affliction potion now, he wouldn’t have to worry about not reaching Sequence 4. It’s too compatible!”

Sequence 5 of the Assassin pathway was known as Affliction or the Demoness of Affliction.

After another terrifying roar, the silver-black illusory liquid beads on Lumian’s body seeped into him. His expression gradually relaxed, and his body ceased its curled-up state.

He lay sprawled beside the collapsed grayish-white stone pillar, reluctant to move for a few seconds.

While his spirituality had recovered and even increased, his body and mind were visibly exhausted. It was akin to the sensation one experienced after completing an exceptionally challenging task in their most focused state.

Lumian, aware of the urgency, forced himself to his feet.

He noticed that the silver-black candle flame had returned to normal, and the surrounding gray fog was gradually dissipating.

His plan to rely on the gray fog's protection against the terrifying roar had failed before implementation.

Mr. Fool's response had a time limit!

Furthermore, he had to consider the interference of the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings.

As Lumian swiftly tidied up the altar, he scrutinized his transformation:

The improvement in spirituality was evident with the Ascetic boon. Lumian believed that even after using the Spell of Harrumph a few times, he could complete nearly eight Spirit World Traversals.

Ascetic had also enhanced his endurance, making him more adaptable to extreme weather. Even if he encountered frost, he wouldn't be frozen. Similarly, he found himself better at enduring emotions and desires. While he still felt them, he could endure many things.

This extended to an Ascetic's core ability, Compression. It could be used for the mind and also produced positive effects in the physical and mystic domains.

The former involved emotions and desires, which were mostly tolerated. They didn't completely disappear but were suppressed. At critical points, they needed to be vented or relieved, or psychological problems could arise. The Compression ability could accumulate these emotions and desires and erupt at critical moments for the desired effect. For Lumian, the negative effects of the Contractee's three abilities and the corresponding effects of mystical items on him were more bearable. However, he needed to regularly break an enemy's neck as a way to vent.

The latter aspect referred to spirituality, strength, and ritual steps. Through Compression, Lumian could compress and store spirituality and strength beyond the average person when he had nothing to do, releasing them when needed. This allowed his spirituality to recover once and temporarily enlarge him. His strength, speed, and agility were sufficient to withstand a Sequence 6 Dawn Paladin of the Warrior pathway for a minute or two. Additionally, the accumulation of ritual steps enabled Lumian to use abilities like the Animal Creation Spell and the Exorcism

Spell in actual combat.

Furthermore, after becoming an Ascetic, Lumian's previous boons had been enhanced. For instance, the number of contract abilities he could withstand had increased to three, although he didn't want to maximize them. He preferred choosing one or two suitable ones, as too many contracts brought too many negative effects. Even Ascetics would suffer because of them, as evidenced by negative examples like Guillaume Bénet and Bouvard.

Of course, this wasn't an immediate concern, as summoning creatures from the spirit world was impossible in this location.

Lumian swiftly stashed away the items and dispelled the wall of spirituality. Handing back the fortunate gold coin to Jenna, he spoke in a low, commanding tone, "Let's make our way to Fourth Epoch Trier."

"Huh?" Jenna was bewildered.

Ciel had warned them to steer clear of the giant and the grand city!

Franca looked back with contemplation and said, "Do you suspect that the fog shrouding the city belongs to Mr. Fool? Entering might provide some protection. We won't have to worry about getting taken out by that lunatic's roar or succumbing to the risk of transforming into a monster?"

"Yes, it's dangerous, but there's a chance for us to defend ourselves and await further developments." Lumian inferred that the same fog enshrouded Fourth Epoch Trier, drawing from the fog around the Samaritan Women's Spring and the lingering shadows of significant figures from the Fourth Epoch.

It emanated from Mr. Fool's powers!

Franca wasted no time and nodded decisively. "Okay."

Jenna chose to trust her two companions without delving into questions.

At that moment, Anthony Reid had finished clearing the battlefield and approached with the spoils.

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Chapter 481 - 481 The Thing in the Suitcase

Chapter 481 The Thing in the Suitcase

“Found these…” he began to explain, but Lumian swiftly cut him off.

Clear and rapid, Lumian outlined their plan, “We’re heading to the outskirts of the city enveloped by the gray fog. Want to come with us?”

Anthony Reid’s eyelids twitched. “Okay.”

He knew going solo could mean a swift demise, especially if the terrifying roar echoed again.

Lumian wasn’t in a hurry to inquire about General Philip’s belongings. Gripping Jenna and Anthony, he signaled Franca to hold onto his collar.

A dark light emanated from the black mark on his shoulder as the quartet disappeared, seemingly teleporting to the periphery of the majestic yet crumbling city, just before the thin gray fog.

What they saw was where they arrived.

Lumian attempted to step into the gray fog, but the seal on his chest remained dormant.

Franca and the others could traverse it without his guidance.

…

Resembling a hungry bear, Olson fixed his gaze on Gardner Martin’s head, devoid of its helmet. His brownish-red eyes flickered with a sinister light, pinpointing Martin’s vulnerability.

In mere seconds, Olson identified Martin’s weakest spot.

Even if he couldn’t deal a fatal blow, inflicting damage to the party again meant a high chance that the Pride Armor would betray its wearer and kill him!

Silently, Olson reached into his pocket, retrieving a yellow bullet held between his thumb and index finger.

A crimson, nearly white fireball rapidly condensed in his palm, leading to a controlled explosion.

The violent shockwave propelled the bullet towards the back of Gardner Martin's head with a thunderous boom.

Gardner Martin staggered, narrowly avoiding the bullet.

Nearly simultaneously, the surroundings were bathed in the bright and holy Sunrise Gleam.

Black smoke billowed from Olson's body as if a long-dead zombie had been exposed to the sunlight created by the Purifiers.

Meanwhile, Gardner Martin, no longer feeble, donned his helmet with a cold expression and sharp eyes.

Despite Olson's formidable resistance to scorching flames, his skull suffered charring from the impact. As the flames dissipated, Gardner Martin's figure detached from the burning spear. Clenching his silver-armored fist, he swung it at Olson's head from midair.

As the flames dissipated, Gardner Martin's figure detached from the burning spear. Clenching his silver-armored fist, he swung it at Olson's head from midair.

Olson's neck snapped, and his head flew up, dragging along a bloody spine.

Gardner Martin's skull-crushing punch missed, and he landed on the ground once again.

However, a heavy and sharp broadsword of light materialized in his other hand at some point, ready for the next phase of the battle.

Gardner Martin thrust the broadsword into the blackened soil, unleashing a terrifying storm. Countless light fragments filled the air, creating chaos in the vicinity.

The Pride Armor swiftly condensed the Sword of Dawn again, the Hurricane of Light forming with a much shorter interval than an ordinary Sequence 6 Dawn Paladin. Only a minute or two had passed since Gardner Martin last wielded this formidable power.

Olson, reduced to just his head with a brownish-red beard, showed focus in his eyes and attempted to merge with a burning-white spear for a hasty retreat.

However, the storm arrived, its light engulfing him completely.

As the Hurricane of Light subsided, Olson's body displayed severe damage, riddled with cracks, some piercing through his chest and tearing internal organs. His severed head, carried by a bloody spine, bore the marks of destruction—eyes

and nose obliterated, skull cracked, and blackened brain exposed.

Gardner Martin, poised and composed, conjured ten to twenty crimson fireballs.

They darted toward Olson's nearly unconscious head, triggering a resounding explosion that shattered the head into fragments and liquid, splattering on the ground.

With a chuckle, Gardner Martin raised his visor, surveying Olson's headless corpse and the scattered skull. He remarked, "I've always found you a little odd. This was a good opportunity to test you. I didn't expect you to really attack me. That's good too. Not only have I eliminated a hidden danger, but I've also counteracted the traitorous curse of the Pride Armor."

Deliberately appearing fine while exposing some problems through the details was meant to bait Olson—simple acts of vulnerability could easily raise the other party's vigilance and suspicion.

With a sigh, Gardner approached the battered suitcase that had fallen to the ground and lifted it, on the verge of shattering.

He had long been curious about its contents, as Olson had always evaded the question. Now, Gardner could finally open it himself.

Gardner Martin unlatched the suitcase and opened it in front of him.

Inside was a head.

The features were unmistakable—deep facial features, brownish-red eyes, slightly disheveled black hair, a few silver strands at the temples, and well-defined facial features. The head which wasn't considered thin was stained with blood.

It was Gardner Martin!

It was Gardner Martin's own head!

…

As they advanced, the looming, half-collapsed palace drew nearer. The city bore the brunt of colossal damage, as if a giant had delivered a devastating blow, unleashing shockwaves that wreaked havoc on the surroundings.

Details eluded Lumian's scrutiny. The lack of sufficient light and the considerable distance obscured the exact nature of the scene. Various houses obstructed their view, and only the excessively tall palace and surrounding structures, despite their partial collapse, allowed them a glimpse of the peripheral city.

"Let's find a nearby hiding spot," Franca suggested, her gaze scanning the area. She had no intention of venturing deeper into Fourth Epoch Trier.

The quartet found themselves on a narrow street, where the houses on both sides were so close that occupants could almost shake hands by extending their arms.

The structures, resembling victims of a violent earthquake, teetered but refused to collapse, adorned with ghastly cracks.

Jenna's attention fixated on a relatively intact house. Iron-black in color, it featured an arched window on the left and a square on the right. Dark-red graffiti adorned one side, while the other remained clean. Not a single weed grew between the rocks.

Apart from the two obvious pots, the house exhibited various asymmetrical details, with centipede-like cracks mainly concentrated on the lower left side.

"Should we go there?" Jenna inquired.

Lumian shook his head.

"The more intact, the higher the likelihood of abnormalities. The current state of Fourth Epoch Trier's citizens is unknown.

"Let's find a completely collapsed building to hide behind. At least, everything inside should be buried."

"Agreed," Franca concurred with Lumian's decision.

In Fourth Epoch Trier, she couldn't fully perform Magic Mirror Divination.

Lumian and his team swiftly reached the center of the dimly lit street. In a setting that could plunge into darkness at any given moment, they strategically maneuvered around the ruins of a dark-red building, seeking cover.

It wasn't until now that Anthony Reid seized an opportunity to extract the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty from his chest, returning it to Jenna.

With the dark-stained black cloak spread on the ground, he showcased his findings.

There were three items in total:

The first, a blackened ulna punctuated by dark-red holes, resembling a rough bone flute that had been kept in storage for ages.

The second, a small wooden box painted in dark hues. Compact enough to fit into a concealed pocket, it featured large holes on both sides veiled by swaying, leather-like "curtains."

Lastly, a collection of gold, silver, and copper coins.

Anthony Reid gestured toward the “bone flute” and explained, “This formed from the convergence of light spots on Philip’s ulna. It seems something formless has settled on it.”

Conspirer or Reaper Beyonder characteristic combined with his ulna and the power of the Deceased boon? Lumian nodded indiscernibly.

Philip hadn’t had a chance to retaliate before, leaving him uncertain about the general’s Sequence—a Sequence 6 Conspirer or a Sequence 5 Reaper. What was clear, however, was the general’s affiliation with the Hunter pathway. This deduction was based on the creation of numerous crimson Fire Ravens, almost white in hue. Moreover, the general wasn’t just a Sequence 7.

If it were the latter, Lumian would have been pleased to obtain the main ingredient for his advancement. The issue lay in the mixture of the power with an evil god’s boon, rendering it unsuitable for direct use in potion concoction.

“What settled on it is the corruption of an evil god. It was a wise choice not to touch it directly,” Lumian informed Anthony.

Within the underground seal, the power of an evil god’s boon couldn’t return to its source.

“This was found on Philip’s body…” Anthony pointed at the dark wooden box. Before he could finish speaking, another frenzied and violent roar echoed from afar.

This time, the four of them, having entered the gray fog, only experienced a slight dizziness and remained unaffected.

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Chapter 482 - 482 Bodies Chasing Heads

482 Bodies Chasing Heads

Franca shook off the dizziness induced by the terrifying roar and sighed from the bottom of her heart.

“As expected, the gray fog here provides protection.”

Without it, facing a roar that could harm their Spirit Body and affect their minds would result in losing control, turning into monsters, or immediate death.

“Praise The Fool!” Lumian openly expressed his faith.

He then reminded her in an icy tone, “But the hidden dangers here might be more terrifying than the previous roar.”

Franca fell silent for a few seconds before speaking in an encouraging tone, “Hidden dangers are preferable to those that have already surfaced. Let’s avoid triggering them. If nothing else occurs, we’ll stay in this corner and wait for help!”

While Jenna and Anthony Reid harbored doubts about the strategy of passivity, they hesitated to venture deep into Fourth Epoch Trier and reluctantly accepted the plan that wasn’t really a plan.

In the eerie silence, Anthony was the first to regain composure. He pointed at the dark wooden box and stated, “I’m not sure of its purpose. A simple, temporary touch doesn’t seem to have any obvious negative effects.”

As for the coins, their significance was apparent. A quick glance and rough calculation revealed a total of 312 verl d’or and 26 coppet.

Franca leaned against a collapsed pillar in the shadows, her eyes fixed on the mysterious dark wooden box. “What the hell is this thing?”

It was obviously no ordinary container; its appearance suggested it held some kind of mysterious power.

Lumian and Anthony turned their attention to the Demoness of Pleasure simultaneously.

Lumian chuckled, “I should be the one asking you that.”

Franca exclaimed, “There was nothing I could do. I couldn’t spare time for spirit channeling, and this place isn’t connected to the real spirit world. I can’t perform Magic Mirror Divination. To understand the abilities, effects, state, and potential drawbacks of these two items, I’ll have to experiment with them myself repeatedly.

“Of course, if we encounter an Artisan, many of our problems might be solved.”

She gestured towards Jenna, saying, “Just like the black Primordial Demoness figurine, it undoubtedly has other functions. For instance, it allows the holder to create Mirror Substitution. As for mine, apart from providing a certain anti-divination and early warning effect, it can only be used as a supplicant during rituals.

“They’re both figurines, differing only in color and orientation. Why such a significant disparity?”

Franca avoided mentioning why she didn’t employ various methods to gather information about the black Primordial Demoness figurine. The unspoken understanding among the group was clear—in their current situation, ensuring their safety took precedence over risking injury or adverse effects to test their spoils of war. Any mishap could lead to dire consequences, potentially even death in the experiment.

As a heavy silence settled among Jenna and the others, Franca sighed inwardly.

The black figurine clearly is problematic, and its mysterious origin is intriguing. It explains why the Demoness Sect wants me to investigate what Gardner had smuggled in through the underground tunnels…

If I hand it over, will the Demoness Sect reward me with the Affliction potion and pledge assistance for my ritual, or will they choose to silence me?

Lumian stroked his chin, addressing Anthony Reid, “In that case, keep the verl d’or. We’ll distribute the remaining spoils of war when we return to the surface.”

Anthony inquired further, “Should we wrap it in a cloak and place it on the ground before taking it when we leave?”

Lumian smiled and gestured at the charred bone flute,

“Otherwise? You can also carry it with you. This way, we might witness the abilities of a Deceased. Philip died in a hurry and didn’t have time to show us.

“Of course, judging from his condition at the time of death, the holder of the item will most likely be the recipient of those abilities in the form of a curse.”

Anthony, unfazed by the mockery, pulled up the blood-stained and tattered black cloak, wrapping it around the bone flute and the small wooden box once more.

Lumian, with a thoughtful expression, poked his head out and looked at the abnormally narrow street.

“If we encounter an enemy we find challenging to handle later, we can consider throwing these two items to him. It might have a miraculous effect. General Philip will be very pleased to know that he would still be of use after death.”

It might bring about a curse of fate!

Despite the tense atmosphere, Lumian’s constant mockery of General Philip brought a slight amusement to Jenna.

“Dammit, General Philip is already dead. There’s no need to harp on about him.”

Before Lumian could respond to Jenna, two tragic screams pierced the air.

The cries emanated from the same location, filled with undisguised fear.

Soon after, two figures rushed into the narrow street, as if pursuing an unidentified flying object hovering in the air.

Franca, alongside Lumian, peered out of the shadows, her expression freezing at the sight.

The two figures, a man and a woman, were decapitated, their necks mangled, devoid of any signs of bones.

Chasing them were two heads, displaying pure fear and dragging bloody, tail-like spines behind them.

One head belonged to a man with puffed-up cheeks resembling a squirrel. He chewed on long, thick black hair that emerged from his dark brown eyes, nostrils, and ears. Similar hair grew from the headless body chasing him, denser and more exaggerated, resembling seaweed.

The other head belonged to a beautiful woman with black hair and brown eyes. She flew forward frantically, coughing and shaking out resplendent starlight. Gravel in the surroundings, sent flying by the pursuit, swayed as if in slow motion.

Suddenly, the two heads and bodies, about to climb over a collapsed building and exit the narrow street, froze.

The heads shook in confusion, attempting to dispel a discomfort. The headless corpses raised their hands, clutching their left chests.

In mere seconds, the two heads, with bloody spines trailing behind them, plummeted into the collapsed black house, their bodies crashing onto the stacked rocks.

A heavy silence fell upon Lumian and the others.

After a few seconds, Lumian scoffed, “See, this is what happens when you venture deep into Fourth Epoch Trier.”

“Do you suspect they’re residents of the Hostel?” Jenna inquired thoughtfully.

Lumian replied with a smirk, “Otherwise? “Where else could you find such fresh heads and bodies in an ancient ruin that’s been buried for a millennium or two?”

This brought back memories of Supervisor Olson. He had been in this state when he first appeared.

Now, Lumian was almost certain that Olson was a true monster, with a head and body that could be separated.

Franca also recalled Gardner Martin’s servants. She withdrew her gaze and pondered for a moment before stating,

“Why do bodiless heads still cough, as if they’re sick…? What happened to them at the end seems like a cerebral infarction. The two headless bodies show signs of cardiac arrest.

“Is this the work of the Sick Church’s evil god’s bestowed, or is there another murderer?

“Right, a Sequence 5 of the Demoness pathway is called Affliction. It can spread various illnesses, and I can enter this place with the Primordial Demoness figurine and the ancient silver mirror…

“This place clearly has a lot to do with the Demoness pathway. Could the high-level power leaking out cause monsters to fall ill and die?”

“Not bad. You still have some intelligence at critical moments,” Lumian praised mockingly.

Jenna, on the other hand, rejoiced.

“Fortunately, we didn’t venture too deep. Otherwise, who knows when we’d fall ill and die.”

Lumian smiled at her.

“Why do you think we’re not currently surrounded by disease?”

“B-but we didn’t cough…” Jenna’s voice trailed off as she glanced at the hidden pocket of her clothes.

Inside was the pitch-black Primordial Demoness figurine.

Franca also peered into her pocket, as if she could discern the bone-carved Primordial Demoness figurine through the fabric.

Anthony turned to Lumian and sought confirmation,

“Are you suggesting that the Fourth Epoch’s Trier is plagued with illnesses, and we’re unharmed because we’re carrying the two figurines?”

Lumian spread his hands and said,

“I believe this explanation makes more sense.”

…

Beyond the gray fog, at the edge of the Fourth Epoch’s Trier ruins.

In the small brown suitcase, Gardner Martin’s blood-stained face suddenly opened, revealing Gardner Martin clad in silver armor, reflected in its eyes.

It opened its mouth and expelled a blazing white fireball.

The distance between them was so close that Gardner Martin couldn’t dodge at all. All he could do was lean back, attempting to avoid the target’s initial attack.

Boom! Gardner Martin was sent flying by the massive explosion.

The spiderweb-like crack on the chest of the silver armor shattered, tearing through the skin and flesh below.

This strike was akin to hitting Gardner Martin’s vital points. Had it not been for the Pride Armor, which absorbed most of the damage, he would have perished on the spot.

However, this meant that the Pride Armor lost its protection over the chest for a period.

Gardner Martin’s bloodied head flew up, dragging along a bloody spine.

On the other side, Olson’s headless corpse stood up once more.

Gardner Martin’s head aimed for the empty neck stump and inserted the ghastly white spine.

Amidst a cracking sound, this “Gardner Martin,” seemingly from hell, twisted his neck and smiled sinisterly at Gardner Martin, who had already changed positions and condensed a large number of crimson Fire Ravens that were nearly white.

“Olson is long dead. I’ve been controlling his head and body.

“In the future, I’ll replace you.”

…

In the wilderness, the ground trembled violently, and blazing cracks slithered into the distance like fiery serpents.

The figures of Magician and Justice appeared.

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Chapter 483 - 483 Hidden History

483 Hidden History

Dressed in a white shirt with a knot and a beige dress, Magician fixed her gaze upon the menacing hurricane that bridged the gap between sky and earth. Her eyes glittered, as if concealing the vast cosmos.

“Vermonda Sauron is indeed a Sequence 1 Conqueror. It’s no wonder He could influence generations of the Sauron family after losing control and going underground. It’s no wonder the Sauron family, once a royal lineage, swiftly declined,” Magician mused, sighing.

Justice, inquisitive, asked, “I wonder how the former leader of the Secret Order, Zaratul, and Emperor Roselle played a role in Vermonda Sauron losing control and entering the Fourth Epoch Trier. The Sauron branch, wielding Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts, obstinately believes that they harmed Vermonda, causing the Conqueror to lose control. The former even left a prophecy to mislead generations of Sauron family members.”

Magician chuckled and replied, “Based on the information Lumian gathered and my research into the seal, the issue deep within Red Swan Castle’s underground maze doesn’t seem like something Zaratul or Emperor Roselle could create. Only a Weather Warlock and a Conqueror can resonate abnormally with Fourth Epoch Trier day after day, creating dangerous changes in corresponding places. Zaratul and Emperor Roselle likely exploited the problems that Red Swan Castle and Vermonda Sauron already had.”

While she spoke, the Tarot Club’s Major Arcana card holder shifted her gaze away from the hurricane sweeping through the world and focused on Fourth Epoch Trier, veiled in a thin gray fog.

The starlight in her eyes remained, as if she sought something to pinpoint her next target. She didn’t abruptly halt and engage in conversation at a crucial moment.

Justice nodded in agreement and remarked, “If it were me, I wouldn’t venture further into Trier after becoming an Angel to minimize the abnormal influence the underground might have on me. Vermonda Sauron disregarded hidden dangers and stayed in Red Swan Castle for an extended period. He must have had a strong desire for something in Fourth Epoch Trier.”

“Didn’t the Sauron family construct the White Maple Palace outside Trier? Previously, Vermonda’s royal family resided there and rarely returned to Trier.” Magician brought up the fact that the Sauron family was aware of the issue before adding, “Zaratul likely played a significant role in Vermonda Sauron’s situation.

As you know, He is an Archangel of the Seer pathway. Without His 'assistance,' it wouldn't have been easy for Vermonda Sauron—even as a Conqueror—to create a leak in the seal. He entered Fourth Epoch Trier after losing control. Back then, the seal's effects weren't as potent as they were a few years ago. There was no need for modifications."

Justice pondered for a moment and said, "What I'm more curious about is who designed the Hostel ritual. Their use of mysticism similarities and loopholes resembles that of high-level Seer, Apprentice, or Marauder Beyonders. Or perhaps they have had long interactions with these high-level Beyonders and were adept at learning."

"Perhaps the corresponding pathway of the Deceased excels in this as well. Perhaps it's secretly influenced by that Celestial Worthy, or perhaps that entity wants to use the temporary opening of the seal to do something. As you know, the Iron and Blood Cross Order used to believe in Him. It's too easy for Him to mislead us," Magician mused, uncertain of the right answer.

Starlight flickered in her eyes; she found it challenging to observe and determine the situation in the thin gray fog.

As Magician scrutinized Fourth Epoch Trier, she informed Justice, "The level of the catacombs' seal corresponds to this location.

"At its heart lies the Samaritan Women's Spring, where Blood Emperor Alista Tudor met His end. The razed imperial palace and its surroundings harbor diverse dangers. The lingering divine power is unimpressive and consumable. Sigh, every time I bring up something of this sort, it feels like I should adopt a more vulgar vocabulary. Only then can I truly capture my sentiments about the Blood Emperor's lunacy.

"Hence, you won't unearth anything significant from here. Only upon approaching will you discern that Mr. Fool's gray fog has grown denser, thicker, and more palpable.

"The catacombs' fourth and third levels correspond to Fourth Epoch Trier, excluding that specific area. Corruption and divine power still linger abundantly. Navigating certain areas demands adherence to specific rules; otherwise, even Angels may meet Their demise.

"The two levels above the catacombs correlate with the wilderness beyond the gray fog. Humans can traverse them to a certain extent, but with Vermonda Sauron lingering, the danger rivals that of the Fourth Epoch Trier…"

Just as Magician concluded her words, a frenzied and terrifying roar echoed from the area where the weather had dramatically shifted.

The formless flames that illuminated the surroundings and shrouded the entire "sky" seemed to be influenced, coalescing into a massive vortex.

Within the vortex, shapeless and translucent flames descended from above, striking the wilderness like a colossal sword that pierced through heaven and earth.

Amidst this chaos, the ground quaked even more violently. Fiery crevices extended further towards Fourth Epoch Trier, concealed within the gray fog.

Magician remained unperturbed as she observed the splendid yet dilapidated city for a while.

Then, she said to Justice, “Let’s enter.”

Justice tersely acknowledged, offering no objections.

Both of them tacitly avoided mentioning Vermonda Sauron, an Archangel who had lost control—a Conqueror. They had no intention of joining the battle or seizing the Beyonder characteristic.

For them, the Tarot Club’s primary goal in this matter was to prevent the evil gods’ bestowed from approaching the innermost seal, ensuring they couldn’t leak the danger within which would affect Trier aboveground and the entire world.

Furthermore, they sought the lost Minor Arcana card holders to guide them out.

As for the Conqueror Beyonder characteristic, symbolizing an Archangel and Sequence 1, as long as it didn’t fall into the hands of heretics, obtaining it wasn’t a particularly grave issue for anyone. Magician didn’t mind observing and, if the opportunity arose, pilfering the gains. However, she wasn’t a high-level Beyonder of the Marauder pathway capable of dividing herself and participating in every battlefield.

Despite achieving a similar effect by moving back and forth, she had to respect Mr. Fool’s gray fog and the core seal of Fourth Epoch Trier. Corresponding restrictions were undoubtedly in place.

Starlight blossomed, and Magician and Justice vanished. The thin gray fog enshrouding Fourth Epoch Trier undulated.

…

As soon as Gardner Martin’s head—nestled over Olson’s headless corpse—finished speaking, a multitude of blazing white fireballs materialized around him, hurtling towards Gardner Martin, who had suffered a chest wound.

In the midst of the rumbling explosion, Gardner Martin’s figure in the silver armor suddenly vanished.

After the shockwave subsided, he reappeared in a corner of the ruins.

Then, he witnessed the other “him” merge with the blazing white flaming spear, which burrowed into the thin gray fog and disappeared into the randomly scattered buildings of Fourth Epoch Trier.

Gardner Martin’s pupils constricted, and he was about to give chase when a violent and furious roar echoed from afar.

His entire body froze. Blood vessels beneath the visor on his face appeared, dark red as if flowing with flames.

Instinctively, Gardner Martin turned and prepared to sprint towards the distant apocalypse-like hurricane.

The space between his eyebrows twitched, and a faint red dot appeared.

Gardner Martin finally regained control of himself. He took a deep breath and returned to normal.

He gazed in the direction the other “him” had fled and muttered in a self-deprecating tone, “Were those harsh words and all-out attacks meant to make it easier for him to escape? As expected of me. Do you realize that failing to assassinate me means staying here means I’ll inevitably kill you?”

As Gardner Martin muttered to himself, he produced a canister made of dark glass, its liquid a green hue reminiscent of grass.

He unscrewed the cap and downed half the canister. The wound on his chest began to heal at a visible rate.

It was a healing agent concocted by a Madame of the Nightstalkers, obtained by Gardner Martin through Philip.

Philip, who had united numerous evil god cults, had no shortage of similar items, but under the Hurricane of Light, the fragile canisters shattered.

After stowing away the remaining half canister of the agent, Gardner Martin, clad in silver-white full-body armor, ventured into the thin gray fog and Fourth Epoch Trier.

…

In the cover of a narrow street, behind a collapsed building, Franca hissed in agreement with Lumian’s conjecture.

“That’s right. This is a true relic from a divine war, and it’s even more dangerous. It’s entirely possible that the entire city is riddled with ailments.”

She suspected that the closer she got to the place where Blood Emperor Alista Tudor had met his end, the more peculiar and horrifying the ailments became. Some seemed to have sprouted from the decaying corpses of deities. Ignoring

Low-Sequence Beyonders whose bodies didn't fundamentally differ from ordinary humans, even Saints and Angels would likely succumb to the "disease" and perish.

Franca paused for a moment before suggesting to Jenna, "Why don't you give the black figurine to Anthony for safekeeping? It might be dangerous for you to hold it, and he can use that item to create his own Mirror Substitution, effectively increasing his chances of survival."

Franca couldn't shake the feeling that it wasn't a wise decision for a female Demoness like Jenna to possess a Primordial Demoness figurine, whether it was the genuine article or the mirrored version.

Without waiting for Jenna's response, Lumian spoke in a deep voice, "It's better if Jenna holds it. She has the lucky gold coin."

"That's true…" Just as Franca finished speaking, she suddenly heard a chime not far away.

It resembled the bell of a bicycle, yet it was clearer and rang out for a longer duration.

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Chapter 484 - 484 Mockery

484 Mockery

Franca wasn't surprised at all, even though she wondered why so many things were happening in this damn place.

This was Fourth Epoch Trier. Even if it wasn't a land of a fallen god, it wouldn't lack abnormalities!

Lumian and the others cautiously emerged from their concealment, peering from different vantage points toward the source of the chimes.

The location wasn't distant, yet the fog in that direction seemed unusually dense. The structures loomed faintly, as though just a fragment of history had materialized.

Within the fog's depths, a contraption reminiscent of a steam locomotive glided by without a fuss. It sported only two carriages, lacking a smokestack. Peculiar frames extended from the top, linking it to something suspended in midair.

Ding ding ding. The train ventured into a zone of even thicker fog, disappearing from view.

Although Franca and her companions couldn't discern the details clearly, an unexplained dread seized them, akin to standing on the precipice or treading on blades piercing their skin.

Before they could contemplate the ramifications of the fog's metamorphosis and the arrival of these peculiar objects, their surroundings plunged into a profound darkness. Dusk gave way, and night loomed.

A dense fog cloaked the area.

Lumian, sensing an unsettling disturbance, yearned to evade it, but the abnormal fog, tainted with a dark hue, obstructed any attempt to "teleport" to an unaffected area. Beyond the fog, the wilderness they came from eluded his senses.

The cold fog permeated their skin, prompting involuntary shivers from Franca and Jenna.

Almost simultaneously, the narrow street came alive with the flickering of candle flames and oil lamps. Laughter, cries, and voices erupted, transforming the once-silent surroundings.

Fourth Epoch Trier burst into vibrant life, resonating with clamor and the pulsations of existence.

Anthony, without conscious thought, surveyed the diverse houses and narrow streets, catching sight of an asymmetrical, pitch-black building. Candlesticks dangled from above, casting light upon the figure standing at the window.

The figure donned a black bonnet, with one side sunken and the other protruding. Dark clothes adorned him, with buttons haphazardly fastened, and a smooth wound diagonally sliced his body from shoulder to waist.

Evidently caused by a sharp broadsword.

In that moment, the man's diagonally cleaved body resembled a child's stacked building blocks, not properly assembled.

He nonchalantly nibbled at a meat pie, chewed morsels falling from the wound to the ground, yet he remained oblivious.

Additional figures emerged in other habitable houses.

Some appeared like melted candles that had solidified once more, their flesh viscous and indistinct. Others had pale-white skin, and greasy white feathers sprouted from their pores, oozing yellowish pus. Some had tiny holes in their bodies, with black insects flying in and out. There were those reduced to white skeletons, with only a mismatched human-skinned mask covering their faces. Some had degenerated into black shadows, as if burned…

On the narrow street, a yellow, blue, and red sphere, about half the height of an adult human, rolled forward. An inverted clown, dressed in exaggerated clothes, stood atop it.

The clown's ears were unlike those of a human, dog-like and slightly pointed. Dark gray hair covered his red-yellow-painted face.

These are the long-dead citizens of Fourth Epoch Trier? Lumian's eyelids twitched.

He, Franca, and the others also observed the bloodstained faces and cold expressions of these figures.

"Very similar, very similar to those Mirror People…" Franca muttered to herself before exclaiming in horror, "Could the gray fog's transformation have transported us to the Fourth Epoch Trier in the mirror? The citizens of Fourth Epoch Trier in reality are dead, but the ones in the mirror are still alive?"

Before she could finish, Lumian and Anthony's gazes turned toward her and Jenna.

“Could it be that it’s the problem with those two things again?” Franca’s scalp tingled as she said, “Did they cause us to be devoured by the mirror’s Fourth Epoch Trier after the gray fog transformed?”

“That’s not it. I believe it’s a universal abnormality. Apart from a few special individuals who enter this place, they all arrive in the mirror ruins after being enveloped by the expanding gray fog.” Lumian observed the narrow street brimming with vitality, pondering for a moment. “The most likely possibility is that the two figurines triggered Fourth Epoch Trier, causing changes like the gray fog’s expansion.”

Jenna fell silent for a moment before frowning.

“But we’ve been here for a while. Why did something only happen now? We didn’t do anything just now…”

“That’s right!” Franca suddenly realized. “Those Hostel residents must have triggered something while wandering around after their entry!”

As soon as Franca finished speaking, a hoarse and terrified shout echoed nearby.

“Help!

“Save me!”

Lumian and his companions turned their attention toward the voice and witnessed a man in a black formal suit, his hair neatly combed like a prominent figure’s secretary, sprinting down the narrow street.

His face was marred by abscesses, oozing mucus. Occasionally, he turned his head 180 degrees, his eyes filled with fear as if a formless and terrifying entity pursued him.

“Save me!”

Amidst his cries, the man’s body suddenly froze, and he involuntarily retreated. His retreat accelerated until he lifted off.

“Ah!”

Amidst intense screams, he plunged into the dense gray fog and the shadowy buildings.

In the next moment, the voice abruptly ceased, and silence enveloped that area.

Lumian and the others’ hearts pounded with a strong sense of danger.

Despite the man in the black suit not being an ordinary person, suspected to be the bestowed of an evil god from the Order of All Extinction or the Sick Church, and having been corrupted by this place to a certain extent, allowing him to turn his

head 180o, Lumian, Anthony, and their companions still felt the terror lurking in the depths of the gray fog.

It was as if they could already envision themselves being “dragged” into the gray fog and vanishing.

However, at that moment, they had no idea what to do or how to hide. Dense black gray fog surrounded the suspected mirror ruins, and unknown dangers loomed in the shadows, quietly approaching.

At that moment, Termiboros’s majestic voice resonated in Lumian’s ears:

“Keep running until you reach that pillar. Don’t stop on the way. Don’t turn back. Don’t teleport. Don’t pull your companions.”

Isn’t… isn’t that the direction where the monster was “devoured”? If we take the initiative to approach, wouldn’t we be sending ourselves as food to its doorstep? Lumian grappled with uncertainty, unsure if Termiboros had sensed real danger and planned to intervene or if He was exploiting the opportunity to advance His own agenda.

“You can choose not to believe it,” Termiboros’s deep voice added.

Despite his suspicions, Lumian’s gaze remained fixed on the spot where the evil god bestowed’s figure had been “devoured.”

Deep within the gray fog, amidst looming, collapsed, and towering buildings, a hazy black pillar stretched into the sky.

Suddenly, Lumian recalled something.

At the entrance of the fourth level of the catacombs—Krismona Night Pillar.

As for Krismona, she was a high-ranking Demoness who had perished during the War of the Four Emperors in Fourth Epoch Trier!

She was even a child of God, a true child of the Primordial Demoness… This place is suspected to be the mirror’s Fourth Epoch Trier… Lumian surveyed the surroundings and saw that the situation elsewhere was similar. He gritted his teeth and said, “Let’s move forward! To the black pillar!”

The sense of danger intensified, pushing Lumian to make a decisive gamble.

Move forward? Franca, Jenna, and Anthony were brimming with questions about Lumian’s choice.

Everyone had witnessed the chilling fate of the man in the formal suit!

Lumian stood tall and declared in a commanding voice, “Jenna, carry the spoils of war. Don’t stop, don’t turn around, and don’t pull any of our companions!”

Upon finishing his sentence, he darted out of his hiding spot.

Given the specificity of Lumian's instructions, Franca cast a glance at him and chose to trust his judgment.

Jenna tightened her grip on the lucky gold coin, hoisted the cloak containing the spoils of war, and followed suit. Anthony, having exacted his revenge, harbored no regrets or obsessions. Lumian had proven his correctness multiple times, so he didn't question him and trailed closely.

Thud! Thud! Thud! The quartet sprinted down the narrow street, passing by the inverted clown, who rolled forward on the ball at a deliberate pace. They plunged into the depths of the gray fog, heading towards the black pillar.

…

In a corner of Fourth Epoch Trier, in front of a black iron-like house adorned with a red pattern, a wilderness overgrown with weeds had been condensed to the size of an ordinary square.

Within a dark-red open carriage in the wilderness, Lady Moon, draped in a loose white robe and a light-colored veil, queried Madame Pualis, who stood beside her, "What's wrong?"

Madame Pualis, dressed in black with her head covered by her right hand, replied, "I can hear my child crying again…"

Lady Moon nodded gently and offered reassurance, "That's unavoidable. Rest here and catch up when you've recovered."

"Are you sure you can handle it alone?" Madame Pualis's facial muscles twitched and distorted intermittently.

Lady Moon smiled and responded, "My child left me a gift. Don't worry."

She didn't consider Madame Night to be of much help in this matter. Madame Night could enter because she needed to stay at the Sacred Heart Cloister to draw attention and couldn't remain in the Hostel.

"Alright," Madame Pualis said regretfully.

After Lady Moon's carriage and the wilderness departed, Madame Night's expression quickly returned to normal.

Lady Moon's carriage, pulled by two Demon-like creatures, advanced for a while before the gray fog thickened and expanded.

Her eyes narrowed as a blood-stained umbilical cord materialized in her hand.

The umbilical cord emitted a brilliant golden sunlight, warding off all corrosion and influence.

Thus, Lady Moon successfully reached the periphery of the land of a fallen god. The gray fog here stood as dense as a wall.

Attempting to approach, she found herself blocked, akin to an ordinary person encountering an impenetrable barrier.

Lady Moon felt a compelling force but couldn't proceed any further.

She whispered in surprise and confusion, "How could this be…"

As she pondered to herself, Lady Moon surveyed her surroundings.

Suddenly, her gaze froze.

On the surface of a nearby half-collapsed palace-like structure, a flamboyant red color seized the wall, outlined in a bloody state: "Didn't anyone tell you that there's another seal here?"

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Chapter 485 - 485 Night Pillar

485 Night Pillar

The intensifying gray fog at the core that spread to every corner of Fourth Epoch Trier didn't faze Gardner Martin, wrapped in sleek silver-white full-body armor. Instead of alarm, delight surged within him. Since the invasion of the power from Building 13 on Avenue du Marché, and being able to hear the great voice, such scenes had frequented his dreams. It felt like returning home, the door wide open for him.

Without hesitation, Gardner Martin sprinted toward the heart of Fourth Epoch Trier, heading for the land of the fallen god.

…

Through a street so narrow that the residents in the houses on both sides could almost reach out and shake hands, Lumian and his companions sprinted forward.

After only a dozen steps, Lumian sensed an intangible force emanating from the pitch-black gray fog. It was like the countless arms of a terrifying entity, gently and methodically caressing every living being to determine its prey.

Lumian's scalp tingled. Even with his clothes providing cover, goosebumps erupted where the formless entity touched him.

Instinctively, he wanted to resist, but then he remembered Termiboros's words.

"Don't stop. Don't turn back. Don't teleport. Don't pull your companions!"

While this didn't explicitly mention resisting, defending, or attacking, Lumian felt it wise to observe and wait for developments.

Suppressing the urge to incinerate the formless entities, he compelled himself to move forward.

Jenna, by his side, and Franca and Anthony behind him, closely monitored Lumian. If he didn't act, neither did they. If he did, they would quickly follow suit.

Observing Lumian refraining from confronting the formless entity in the dim gray fog, they braced themselves, enduring the intense and danger-filled caresses.

In the midst of this, Franca found the formless object somewhat familiar.

Recalling the suspicion that this place was the mirror's Fourth Epoch Trier, closely linked to the Demoness pathway, she quickly had an answer.

It bore a striking resemblance to a Demoness of Pleasure's spider silk!

Could it be left behind by a high-level Demoness? Franca imagined a scene: a colossal pitch-black, half-human spider, nestled silently in the depths of the gray fog, extending spider silk that seemed to possess a life of its own, attempting to locate and capture its prey.

After covering more than ten steps in a sprint, Lumian was pleasantly surprised to notice the formless entity slowly retracting. It no longer actively caressed him, but given their dense presence, occasional brushes or touches were inevitable.

This change appeared to be a response to his proactive approach towards the source of the formless entities.

These formless entities seemed to single out those attempting to escape!

Upon breaking free from the narrow street and delving into the thick gray fog, Lumian suddenly felt his hair stand on end, a chilling sensation running down his spine.

His intuition warned of immense danger ahead, a threat capable of obliterating them all. The consequences of getting closer were beyond imagination.

Franca and the others involuntarily slowed down. The horror felt palpable, like a loaded revolver pressed against their foreheads, poised to fire at any moment.

Lumian clenched his teeth and pressed on.

Having chosen to trust Termiboros's advice, he needed to endure until there was evidence to the contrary. Otherwise, he might as well do something else from the beginning!

He didn't halt, and Jenna and the others didn't dare to either. They resembled fools aware of an impending cliff, understanding their insignificance, yet choosing to rush forward, like an idiot.

At that moment, Lumian caught sight from the corner of his eye of black flames erupting over Jenna's body. Pain etched her face, fear mirrored in her eyes.

Crack! Jenna shattered like a mirror, only to reappear, still engulfed in black flames and frost.

Her eyes pleaded with Lumian.

Instinctively, Lumian raised his left hand, as if to aid Jenna. However, a brief moment of hesitation swept over him, and he withdrew his hand, fixing his gaze ahead.

Don’t pull companions!

Despair, surprise, and resentment filled Jenna’s eyes instantly.

She coughed and came to a standstill.

Swiftly ensnared by the formless entities, she was dragged deeper into the gray fog.

Franca, witnessing this, had an immediate change in expression, ready to offer assistance when Lumian’s instructions flashed through her mind.

She hesitated.

In that moment, Jenna’s expression transformed into one of pure hatred, blood seeping from the pores on her face. A shrill scream escaped her lips, akin to a curse echoing towards everyone.

Seeing this, Lumian and the others experienced a strange sense of relief.

This Jenna seemed more like a Mirror Person!

Amidst the shrill scream, Jenna vanished into the depths of the gray fog, her voice abruptly silenced.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian caught Jenna in his peripheral vision, sprinting beside him with an anxious and nervous expression.

As expected! Lumian roughly comprehended why Termiboros had cautioned against pulling companions.

In this realm, a companion could seamlessly switch with their mirror counterpart at any moment. Assisting the “Mirror Person” risked harm to their true companion, leading to complete assimilation into this place, becoming “food” for the entity at the source of the formless objects.

Dammit! Couldn’t you be more explicit? These reasons aren’t particularly intricate. You insist on us experiencing them ourselves and overcoming them! Cursing Termiboros inwardly, Lumian pressed on with even more determination.

In the subsequent encounters, similar challenges arose multiple times. Yet, armed with experience, they refrained from resisting or attempting escape. They resisted the impulse to aid their companions.

Lumian and the others, focused on their path, ran straight using the black pillar as a guide. Occasionally, they bypassed obstacles.

Finally, the black pillar loomed not far ahead.

Simultaneously, Lumian, Anthony, and the rest were astonished to find that the imminent danger, on the verge of colliding with them, had mysteriously vanished.

No, it hadn't disappeared. It was now behind Lumian and the group—distant!

Running toward danger results in moving away from it? Just like the pale-black stone brick area in the wilderness, the direction here is twisted and chaotic? Amid Lumian's surprise, he didn't glance back, nor did he pause to celebrate. He persisted, sprinting toward the black pillar.

Had he not set a resolute example, Franca and Jenna might have turned around. Nonetheless, they pressed forward, a sense of relief mingling with lingering fear.

After covering dozens of meters, the quartet reached the square where the black pillar stood.

The ground was paved with pale-black stone bricks, and numerous grayish-white stone pillars lay in ruins, only a few remnants remaining.

Compared to the black pillars, these "surviving" grayish-white stone pillars were as inconspicuous as ants.

The colossal black pillar surpassed even the Krismona Night Pillar Lumian had witnessed on the third level of the catacombs. It stretched into the sky, seeming to burn with formless flames, its destination shrouded in mystery.

The scene brought to Lumian's mind the pale-black stone bricks in the wilderness outside and the numerous grayish-white stone pillars in the vicinity, but nothing akin to the black pillar.

Had the Night Pillar in the wilderness collapsed and been destroyed? Did that event lead to the old bones crawling out, causing the corruption in Building 13 on Avenue du Marché? Was it then mended by constructing the catacombs and relocating countless corpses? Lumian ventured a guess based on these thoughts.

Franca and Jenna surveyed the square ahead, observing that the area surrounding the black pillar had sunk into the ground. Below, there seemed to be white magma flowing, and faint black tentacles lurked.

Though there were no explicit warnings of danger, Lumian and the others sensed that this might be even more dangerous than the entity they had previously encountered.

Next to the black pillar stood a 1.78-meter-tall snowman. Its frosty face, cracked to form eyes, nose, and mouth, lacked ears.

As Lumian's gaze nonchalantly swept across the snowman, it abruptly froze.

He noticed a dark stain on the snowman's right eye, as if it wore a monocle.

Amon? Lumian startled, a desire to flee taking hold.

At that moment, Termiboros's majestic voice echoed in his ears.

"It's dead."

Dead… Lumian breathed a sigh of relief.

It made sense. Amon, a nobleman of the Fourth Epoch's Tudor Empire, wouldn't be exempt from the casualties of the divine war. It was plausible that dozens, even hundreds of avatars perished back then. Retrieving them might not have been feasible in the circumstances.

For some reason, Lumian detected a trace of joy in Termiboros's concise words.

Observing the snowman, Anthony suddenly felt his forehead heat up, and his breath turned hot. His Spirit Body rapidly weakened.

"I'm infected," he calmly informed his companions.

Ailment… Lumian glanced at the black pillar again.

Could this be the true form of the Krismona Night Pillar?

Even the figurine of the Primordial Demoness can't stem the corruption of ailments in this place?

Franca's heart skipped a beat as she instructed Jenna, "Take out that figurine."

Simultaneously, she reached into her pocket and pulled out the Primordial Demoness figurine crafted from bone.

After Jenna handed her the black one, Franca motioned for Anthony to come closer and observed his expression.

"How do you feel now?"

"It seems better. I'm… I'm getting better." Anthony scrutinized his physical condition earnestly.

Franca smiled.

"I knew it. How could Jenna and I be fine, but you're sick?

"Looks like we have to maintain a certain distance from the figurines."

As soon as she finished speaking, blazing white Fire Ravens soared out from behind the black pillar, hurtling toward them.

Then, a figure emerged. It was Gardner Martin, attired in a black formal suit and yellow vest, an unusual sight.

His gaze fixed on the black figurine in Jenna's hand and the bone statue in Franca's, revealing a longing expression.

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Chapter 486 - 486 The Mirror People's Conspiracy

486 The Mirror People's Conspiracy

As the blazing-white Fire Ravens erupted from behind the black pillar, Lumian's reflexes kicked in.

While Franca, engrossed in deciphering the cause of Anthony's ailment, Lumian seemingly engaged in the discussion. Yet, beneath the facade, he—a Hunter—maintained a vigilant stance, keenly aware of his surroundings.

In this dangerous and ominous setting, he couldn't afford to focus solely on conversation.

Lumian thrust his palms towards the oncoming blazing-white Fire Ravens. In a swift motion, a colossal crimson fireball materialized, hastily intercepting the impending assault.

However, before it could reach its target, the unstable structure caused it to detonate.

Amidst the explosive chaos, a shockwave, laced with flames, surged forward and sideways, engulfing nearly all the blazing-white Fire Ravens like a torrent.

Confronting the fiery wave head-on, the Fire Ravens staggered, losing stability in the storm. They prematurely blossomed, transforming into a dazzling display of fireworks.

The Fire Ravens circling from the side were also affected by the explosive waves, deviating from their intended trajectories or being partially extinguished.

Hunters, particularly those at higher Sequences like Pyromaniac and Conspirer, proved unparalleled in defending against the swarm attacks of Fire Ravens.

Thanks to this interference, Franca and Jenna, both Assassins, along with the Psychiatrist, Anthony Reid, effortlessly dodged the tracking-capable, blazing-white Fire Ravens. They observed as these dangerous projectiles landed on the ground, setting off fiery eruptions.

In the blink of an eye, Franca vanished, and Jenna swiftly moved toward the nearest grayish-white stone pillar. She scattered fluorescent powder and chanted the Invisibility incantation in Hermes.

Anthony, seemingly back in the fray, rolled and sprinted, encircling another relatively intact grayish-white stone pillar in an attempt to find cover.

Lumian maintained his position, hands poised to push forward. His golden-black hair swirled in the ordinary "gust of wind" that followed the massive fireball's explosion.

Looking at Gardner Martin, unusually tall and face marked with bloodstains, Lumian taunted, "Is this your way of greeting? Sending a swarm of Fire Ravens to welcome us? Hey, what's with the change in appearance and the missing armor? Are you the mirror's Gardner Martin?"

Gardner Martin, donned in a black formal suit and yellow vest, ceased his attack. Instead, he paused and sneered, "Sooner or later, I'll become the real Gardner Martin."

Observing the situation, Lumian didn't rush to "teleport" behind Gardner Martin. He chuckled and remarked, "So, you're admitting to being a counterfeit?"

His aim was to provoke and incite the other party, unraveling the motives of these Mirror People.

Surely, their purpose wasn't merely to replace genuine forms and return to the real world for a serene life.

It had to be one of the objectives, but not the sole or primary one. The actions of a Mirror Person were too intricate for such a straightforward motive.

Mirror Gardner Martin scanned Lumian's surroundings, as if seeking the invisible Franca and Jenna.

In response to Lumian's mockery, he sneered and stated, "Counterfeit? We, the counterfeits, might be the only ones to secure victory and survive.

"Look at the Fourth Epoch Trier, destroyed and reduced to ruins. Yet, it persists within the mirror. All its citizens remain alive."

You call that living? Lumian Lumian refrained from interrupting the Mirror Gardner's resentful narrative.

The formidable Beyonder with a peculiar form chuckled.

"Counterfeit? Countless members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order you usually encounter are already on our side. They've emerged from the mirror, spawned since the unexpected seal incident decades ago and the ensuing power leak. We've been covertly engaging in similar activities.

"Otherwise, how would Gardner Martin, Tony Twain, and Diest have known about Vermonda Sauron's underground entrance into the seal? How would they have recognized it as a Sequence 1 Conqueror Beyonder characteristic? How could they

have been so focused on exploring the underground and inadvertently influenced?"

"…" Lumian was taken aback.

So, this involves the plans of your Mirror People?

Damn it, how many factions are entangled in this, and how many conspiracies are woven together?

While Gardner's words in the mirror shed light on the murky situation, making many details more plausible, Lumian still found it absurd.

Aren't there too many factions and conspiracies? And behind these conspiracies, even more conspiracies, as intricate as spiderwebs!

Mirror Gardner's expression returned to normal as he smiled and said,

"Ever wonder how the Iron and Blood Cross Order discovered the black figurine? How did they realize they could exploit the uniqueness of this mirror world to bypass the seal?

"Do you dare to keep carrying that figurine? It holds no practical value for you. Why not hand it over to me, and I'll let you leave this mirror world?

"Don't worry; you're not Gardner Martin. I can't replace you. I harbor no insurmountable malice towards you."

So, were the Fire Ravens from earlier merely a greeting? Lumian laughed and inquired, "Essentially, that figurine holds great value for you? What do you people intend to do with it?"

Lumian suspected that the Iron and Blood Cross Order's discovery or acquisition of the black Primordial Demoness figurine was orchestrated by these Mirror People. Their plan was undoubtedly intricate.

Mirror Gardner's lips curled as he replied, "Did you think I'd tell you?"

"Whom do you people serve?" Lumian interjected.

As the Mirror Gardner's mouth opened, his expression suddenly darkened, and his eyes brimmed with hatred.

"That's all the answers!"

Observing the Mirror Gardner's sudden shift, Lumian had a profound realization that these Mirror People could maintain normalcy most of the time and seamlessly replace the originals. However, when certain matters arose, they couldn't suppress their monstrous side.

Mirror Gardner seemed poised to convince Lumian and the others to surrender the black Primordial Demoness figurine when a figure materialized behind him.

Franca, lacking an Assassin suit, revealed a Hidden Blade from her left wrist. Enveloped in black flames, she thrust it into Mirror Gardner's back, causing the blood-stained figure to shatter like a mirror.

He reappeared on the other side of the black pillar, on the fringe of the collapsed area, wearing a sinister smile. He declared, "You're stalling for time and completing preparations. Me too!"

As he finished speaking, a man emerged from the debris of a crumbled grayish-white stone pillar outside the collapsed area, dripping with magma.

His face bore bloodstains too, and his short flaxen-colored hair, along with slightly thick brown eyebrows, framed aqua-blue eyes and thin lips. Despite his unremarkable appearance, he uncannily resembled Franca.

Witnessing this figure, a phrase flashed through Franca's mind: "It's over…"

It was her past self, her former identity as a man!

Ever since Franca began suspecting that this area represented the mirror's Fourth Epoch Trier, she harbored concerns that her past self would surface, exposing his true identity to Jenna. Now, her fears materialized.

It's over. Social death… Franca's mind raced as a woman emerged from behind another intact grayish-white stone pillar.

Adorned in a white shirt, a black vest, and dark pants, her pure black hair cascading over her shoulders, she exuded an imposing beauty. Despite her deep and delicate facial features, her blue eyes betrayed a sense of mockery.

Uh, t-this is eerily similar to Ciel… The mirror version of him is a woman? Franca swiftly scanned her surroundings, concealing herself again.

Behind different grayish-white stone pillars, two more figures emerged. One donned mercenary attire, with handsomely styled flaxen-colored hair, reminiscent of Jenna. The other wore military-green tops and bottoms, exuding a mature charm with a slightly plump figure. Beautiful with eyes as deep as an ancient forest pond.

Dammit! A male version of Jenna and a female version of Anthony! Anthony looks even more handsome and charming! This is different from the mirror world outside! Franca felt puzzled yet relieved.

This could provide a plausible explanation for "his" former appearance to resurface!

Lumian, equally perplexed by his mirror counterpart having a different gender, and the others weren't experiencing the same thing as Franca. Even if the mirror

reflected their past selves, it shouldn't manifest like this.

If this was a fusion of a Demoness's mirror world, the stacking of feminization, and one's past, Jenna should be a woman, no matter what!

As Lumian's thoughts raced, he considered the Hunter pathway's ability to transform women into men, which was adjacent to the Demoness pathway.

Could it be that this mirror world is influenced by the Blood Emperor's corpse or residual divine power? Is it akin to Mr. Fool and the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings—a power controlling these two pathways leaked, forming a unique mirror world that causes an overall reversal? Lumian didn't delve too deeply into it, as Mirror Gardner and his four helpers attacked.

The "Mirror Person" in a black formal suit and yellow vest didn't conceal his hatred, excitement, and desire.

…

In the wilderness, the entire ground seemed to sink two to three meters.

Diest's massive iron soldiers and yellowish-skinned giant entourage stood at the edge of the hurricane. Occasionally, one of them would self-destruct, reducing to fragments.

Despite the wary standoff between the president of the Iron and Blood Cross Order and Snarner Einhorn, They directed Their attention to the mildly intelligent monster that appeared to have lost control and was more challenging to deal with.

In the intense battle, They managed to restrain or knock Vermonda Sauron to the ground two or three times, but They themselves were also affected, in a dire state that hindered Them from seizing the opportunity.

In the current moment, They found themselves temporarily disabled.

Suddenly, a surge of knowledge materialized into a beautiful woman wearing a brown captain's coat, with long chestnut hair and eyes resembling the blue sea.

Snarner, Diest, and the others' hearts tightened, fearing that the newcomer would take the initiative and ultimately claim the Conqueror Beyonder characteristic.

They all recognized the woman:

The eldest daughter of the deceased Emperor Roselle, Bernadette Gustav!

She, too, was an Angel!

Holding a pale-golden lamp, Bernadette observed the Angels' battle without direct involvement. Transforming into a torrent of knowledge once again, she surged towards the gray fog-shrouded Fourth Epoch Trier.

It was as if She had casually glanced at them while passing by.

"…" Snarner and Diest were initially taken aback by Her actions, but They swiftly regained Their composure and resumed their battle.

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Chapter 487 - 487 Self-Confrontation

487 Self-Confrontation

In Fourth Epoch Trier, shrouded in a dense gray fog, Voisin Sanson, with thick blond locks, a well-kept beard, and deep-set features, yielded to the whims of destiny. He threaded through the chaotic streets, drawing nearer to the faintly discernible grand palace.

Abruptly, the stone slab beneath his feet shattered, and with swift precision, a skeletal hand shot up, seizing his ankle.

At the same instant, a knight adorned in jet-black armor charged on horseback. Wielding a broadsword ablaze in ghostly white flames, he slashed diagonally at Voisin Sanson.

Voisin Sanson's form swiftly morphed into an ethereal state, resilient against the onslaught of the pitch-black knight. However, with the passage of time, it gradually faded until it dissipated entirely.

His true self materialized almost 20 meters distant, fixating on the adversary.

Beneath the black visor of the knight, two dark-red flames flickered like candlelight. A grotesque wound, with pale-white intestines protruding, adorned its chest and abdomen. Perched on a desiccated white horse resembling a skeletal corpse,

the knight presided over a vast square wilderness. Within this expanse, myriad figures roamed. Some draped in white linen, their faces pallid and vacant. Others reduced to mere skeletons, while some concealed their visages behind masks of white paper.

On the fringes of the wilderness, a dark-red cradle-shaped carriage advanced, drawn by two abyssal, Demon-like creatures boasting goat horns.

Seated within the carriage was the regal Madame Pualis. Adorned with a flower crown and a green dress, her long brown hair was elegantly tied high. Bright brown eyes gazed forth as she held a small bowl crafted from green jade in one hand and an oak branch entwined with mistletoe in the other.

"What do you want?" Voisin Sanson inquired with a calm, resonant voice.

Madame Pualis responded, her smile unwavering, "Revenge, naturally."

Her eyes, once warm, gradually turned cold, but the grin on her face endured.

“Revenge…” Voisin Sanson echoed the word, a note of confusion in his voice. After a brief pause, he furrowed his brow and questioned, “For Aurore?”

In that moment, the undead and several Death Knights scattered across the wilderness withheld their attacks on Voisin Sanson, as if anticipating the emotional release sought by the Madame they served.

Seated within the carriage, Madame Pualis offered a self-deprecating smile.

“For a Villain, one-sided love is destined to be fleeting. Passion inevitably wanes quickly. Yet, she met her end during that brief period, becoming a thorn lodged deep in my heart, unextractable. The mere thought of it is painful, fueling my anger and resentment.

“And all of this was caused by you!

“I desired to strike when we crossed paths earlier, but the circumstances weren’t conducive. Lady Moon had yet to make her entrance, and I couldn’t afford to delay the Great Mother’s affairs for a personal vendetta. But now, in this quiet moment…”

Voisin Sanson narrowed his eyes. “After receiving the Great Mother’s boon, shouldn’t these delicate and easily shattered emotions be eradicated? Aren’t you worried about undermining the grand objectives of the great entities?”

Madame Pualis chuckled and replied, “There are more fitting and potent individuals for that task. Like Lady Moon. As for me…”

Her expression softened, revealing a trace of wistfulness.

“In the past, I put my faith in the Great Mother to attain strength and break free from the constraints of the antiquated Churches. I didn’t have to concern myself with moral judgments or public opinion. No need to fear being attacked by some past victim at any moment, free to do as I pleased. Now, what I desire is vengeance!”

As Madame Pualis concluded her words, a pair of ethereal wings unfolded behind her, adorned with brown feathers of human size.

“Ah!”

A sharply discordant and anguished scream escaped her lips.

The remaining glass in the nearby structures shattered. Voisin Sanson’s mind reverberated, as if he could sense his Spirit Body wailing.

…

In the rundown square, suspected to be the whereabouts of Krismona Night Pillar, Lumian zeroed in on his feminine “mirror self.”

Only he comprehended the extent of the trouble he posed!

He might not be the most formidable presence among the gathering, but his unique skills and array of items could swiftly tip the scales in his favor. It was imperative to neutralize him in advance!

As for the mirror version of Gardner Martin, it was suspected that he possessed Mirror Substitution—proving challenging to dispatch swiftly. Lumian's strategy was to eliminate the auxiliary threats first before zeroing in on him.

When the moment arrived, the combined effects of Psychiatrist's Frenzy, Flog's strikes, and the arousal triggered by Beatrice's Necklace would exploit the psychological vulnerabilities of the Mirror People. Their abundance of negative emotions and the potent desire to achieve and supplant made them susceptible.

A dark mark on Lumian's shoulder illuminated, and his form abruptly vanished, reappearing behind the heroic-looking female Lumian, similarly attired but with black hair.

Almost simultaneously, the blue eyes of the female Lumian gleamed with a mocking glint.

Then, she vanished.

Her figure materialized behind Anthony Reid, mostly concealed by the grayish-white stone pillar.

Spirit World Traversal!

She knew the technique as well!

Dammit! Lumian cursed inwardly. The dark mark on his right shoulder emitted another shadowy glow.

He had to hurry to his aid.

While he had considered the possibility of his mirror self possessing teleportation abilities, he had anticipated that the other party would target him, prioritizing his elimination—the most significant threat. At worst, they might exchange positions. However, he hadn't expected the female Lumian to focus on Anthony Reid.

In that critical moment, Lumian pieced together the rationale.

Primarily, the Mirror Person harbored an intense resentment toward the original counterpart, driven by a desire to supplant them. Given their profound psychological issues, these could be effectively countered by Psychiatrist's Frenzy and similar abilities. Secondly, Anthony Reid lacked proficiency in evasion and lacked diverse substitutes. His defense wasn't substantially superior to that of an ordinary person, rendering him susceptible to swift elimination, thereby reducing their team's strength.

As Lumian engaged in discourse with the Mirror Gardner Martin, Anthony Reid remained concealed behind a nearby grayish-white stone pillar. He observed his surroundings and assessed the enemy's mental state, strategizing his actions for the impending battle.

He had noticed the appearance of his feminine version, as well as the Mirror Gardner, male Jenna, and male Franca to either hide in the shadows or vanish. The complexity of the situation intensified, and he instinctively sensed the impending challenge posed by these formidable adversaries.

As the figure of the female Lumian vanished, Anthony Reid, familiar with Lumian's Spirit World Traversal, quickly discerned the monster's intentions and thought process.

She was employing "teleportation," with him as her target. Her primary focus was dealing with the Psychiatrist!

As these realizations raced through his mind, Anthony didn't attempt to evade to either side.

Given the proximity and his limited physical abilities, escaping the danger zone before female Lumian unleashed her subsequent onslaught was an impossibility.

Instead, he opted for an offensive approach, intending to disrupt any forthcoming storm of attacks with his own strikes!

Anthony forcibly twisted his body, his eyes widening in silent determination, a faint golden hue tinting his gaze.

Then, he confronted the captivating and seemingly welcoming figure of female Lumian.

The other party harrumphed.

Spell of Harrumph!

Two beams of white light shot out from female Lumian's nostrils, striking Anthony.

As the white beams reflected in Anthony's eyes, he made no attempt to dodge or evade. Instead, he invoked Frenzy.

With a thud, he crumpled to the ground, unconscious.

Female Lumian's facial muscles contorted, and dark-red blood vessels emerged beneath her skin, resembling tiny fire serpents coming to life.

Her blue eyes radiated violence and madness, while crimson flames bordering on white emanated from her body.

Lumian materialized beside her and the unconscious Anthony. Choosing not to employ the Spell of Harrumph, he clenched his right hand, enveloped in almost blazing-white flames, and delivered a punch to his “mirror self’s” head.

With a cracking sound, female Lumian’s body shattered like a mirror.

She, too, possessed Mirror Substitution!

Upon witnessing this, Lumian cursed inwardly once more.

Dogsh*t!

Despite anticipating that these Mirror People were closely related to mirrors and might have multiple Mirror Substitutions, thus opting for a flaming punch instead of the Spell of Harrumph to conserve spirituality, the confirmation left him frustrated and angered.

Only by facing it personally did he realize how repulsive abilities like Mirror Substitution and Paper Figurine Substitutes were!

Now, there were a total of five enemies with Mirror Substitution. Four of them had even replicated their team’s abilities. How could they possibly prevail in such a situation?

In that moment, the flames dissipated from Lumian’s fiery fist, precisely as expected, landing on Anthony Reid.

The scalding pain abruptly snapped the Psychiatrist out of his stupor. Reacting instinctively, he rolled to smother the flames.

Suddenly, Mirror Gardner Martin’s cold, smiling voice echoed from an unseen location.

“How does it feel? Are my aides proving stronger than you expected?

“Unfortunately, they hail from profound mirror images, and their genders have been reversed. They can’t replace you and return to the real world.

“What do you say? Surrender the figurine in exchange for my friendship and an opportunity to depart this place? It’s of no use to you.”

If you’re so powerful, why don’t you just kill us and take the figurine? Are you wary of something? For example, Termiboros’s escape? Or are you deliberately using such words to weaken our resistance and ensure your own safety to the greatest extent? Or are you actually not strong and are stalling for time for some development? A series of guesses raced through Lumian’s mind.

Meanwhile, Anthony Reid, having extinguished the flames, rose to his feet and coughed.

Lumian’s throat itched as he heard that.

Soon, Franca and Jenna emerged from invisibility amid uncontrollable coughing, having intended to encircle the female Anthony.

The voice of the Mirror Gardner resonated, accompanied by evident laughter.

“I neglected to mention that the Fire Raven I initially employed carries an Affliction disease. Igniting and detonating them only aids the spread of the disease.

“Those two figurines can only suppress non-conscious diseases, but this—this is under my control!”

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Chapter 488 - 488 Mutual Provocation

488 Mutual Provocation

Fire Raven fused with an Affliction disease? Is that even possible? Will I pull off something similar when I switch to the Hunter pathway? Is this the merging of different abilities through pathway switching? It's more unique and bizarre? As Franca coughed, surprise, solemnity, and a touch of anticipation painted her expression.

Even though she was compelled to break her invisibility, Franca found herself in close quarters with the female Anthony. Her left hand rose, directing the Ring of Punishment, snug around her thumb, at the Mirror Person.

Yet, Franca refrained from employing Psychic Piercing. It was a calculated move to confound the target and any hidden foes.

Having observed Lumian's skirmish, Franca suspected that female Anthony also possessed Mirror Substitution. Psychic Piercing wouldn't yield the desired effect.

In that case, why not afflict the opponent with a negative state that wouldn't trigger Mirror Substitution?

Beatrice's Necklace, dangling from Franca's chest, reflected the engulfing flames, stirring female Anthony's ambitions to life.

Franca had long discerned that these Mirror People harbored resentment and animosity toward their authentic selves. Their burning desire to prove themselves was their weakness.

The longing for success served as their greatest vulnerability.

As two coughs reached female Anthony's ears, she, being a Psychiatrist, mirrored the choice made by her male counterpart.

Unable to evade the ensuing assaults, she swiveled halfway around, locking eyes with Franca and Jenna, who had already materialized.

Her pupils turned vertical and shifted to a pale-golden hue.

Awe!

Unlike her male counterpart, female Anthony opted for Awe, considering the presence of two assailants. This ability had the potential to influence both targets.

The aura of a dragon—the pinnacle of the food chain—swiftly descended. Franca and Jenna couldn't help but tremble in fear.

One of them found themselves immobilized, while the other sought refuge behind the nearest grayish-white stone pillar.

Before female Anthony could unleash Awe, Jenna, still coughing, seized the moment. She flung a half-blood-stained cloak, causing the bone flute and wooden box to tumble toward the target's feet.

With her other hand, Jenna pulled the trigger of her revolver, propelling a yellow bullet engulfed in black flames towards female Anthony.

However, in that critical moment, Awe took effect. Jenna's right hand quivered, causing the bullet to veer off course.

Amidst the gunfire, the shadowed Mirror Gardner narrowly evaded the bullet's trajectory.

Swiftly moving, he leaped to the ground, dodging the projectile, and rolled into another shadow, vanishing from sight.

Unharmed, female Anthony's eyes seemed to blaze with flames. She abandoned the idea of casting Frenzy on Franca, who succumbed to the effects of Awe, redirecting her focus to the coughing and moving male version of herself.

Thud! Thud! Thud! She charged forward, determined to prove herself by defeating the male Anthony.

At that moment, figures materialized behind the frozen Franca and the fleeing Jenna. They were male Franca and male Jenna, who had previously concealed themselves with their abilities.

The former aimed his hidden blade at Franca's back and struck with all his might. The latter fixed a glare at Jenna's back and pulled the trigger.

With two cracking sounds, Franca and Jenna's bodies shattered like mirrors, allowing them to escape the effects of Awe. However, their throats remained irritated. They had no choice but to endure the discomfort and occasionally cough as they faced off against male Franca and Jenna.

Lumian's throat itched, and his head, accustomed to enduring high temperatures, still radiated warmth.

As an Ascetic, this level of illness couldn't challenge his endurance. He glanced at female Lumian, not far away, and crimson flames enveloped him, transforming into a fireball that shot forward.

Female Lumian, her face still marked by blood vessels, sneered and vanished from her spot once more.

Spirit World Traversal again!

Her figure reappeared behind the rapidly moving Anthony, as if she wouldn't stop until she had vanquished the Psychiatrist.

Just then, the fireball that had just shot out dissipated prematurely, morphing into a stream of light.

In the stream of light, Lumian's figure flashed as he "teleported" to Anthony's side.

He had been feigning an attack, anticipating female Lumian's use of Spirit World Traversal. He seized the opportunity to closely follow and block her!

To achieve this, Lumian not only destabilized the fireball's structure in advance but also utilized Lie's ability to strengthen his control over flames.

Appearing beside Anthony as swiftly as female Lumian, he promptly raised his iron-black boxing gloves and unleashed a flurry of chain punches!

Simultaneously, Lumian conjured the desire he longed to witness in his mind.

The desire to replace a real person!

This desire proved easier to trigger, and its detonation even better!

Having already adorned the Flog boxing gloves, Lumian aspired to exploit this state, potentially immune to Mirror Substitution, to impact the target and temporarily incapacitate his "mirror self" in combat.

With a resounding bang, Lumian's left and right punches met the resistance of female Lumian's raised hand. However, she lacked boxing gloves, and her forearm bore several bleeding punctures from Flog's short thorns.

Her eyes brimmed with escalating resentment and malice, as though she yearned for Lumian's demise in the very next second.

She had entirely forsaken her pursuit of Anthony Reid.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Lumian unleashed a barrage of punches, incessantly thwarting his mirror self's attempts to employ other abilities.

He persisted in taunting his counterpart.

"Hey, no Flog boxing gloves? Are you so feeble that you can't even mirror a mystical item below the demigod level?"

On the one hand, Lumian sought an emotional release. On the other, he aimed to use Provocation to incense his female self, heightening the likelihood of the Flog boxing gloves triggering the other's desires and emotions.

Female Lumian didn't hide her anger. Blocking Lumian's punches, she taunted with Provocation, "Imbecile! If you had detected Aurore's anomaly earlier, the issue might have been resolved.

"Imbecile! If it were me, I would've undoubtedly handled it better than you!"

Lumian's mind buzzed. Even as an Ascetic, he found himself affected by Provocation.

This frustration and guilt had long been buried deep in his heart, one of the root causes of all his pain.

His eyes turned bloodshot, a blend of embarrassment, anger, and a compelling urge to self-destruct surged from the depths of his being.

His attacks intensified as he sought to infuse the thought into his right hand. He wanted to witness the outcome if he unleashed the Blood Emperor's aura here in the mirror's Fourth Epoch Trier.

When the time came, everyone present—Voisin Sanson and the other gods bestowed from different regions—would meet their demise together!

Just then, Lumian's thoughts abruptly cleared. His emotions and impulses felt as though caressed by a gentle breeze. The melodious melody his sister Aurore used to hum seemed to echo in his ears, swiftly calming him.

"Placate!"

Psychiatrist Anthony Reid's Placate.

Seizing the opportunity while Lumian relentlessly pounded female Lumian with punches, Anthony distanced himself. As he eluded the pursuit of his female self, he circled back to Lumian's vicinity. Sensing his companion's volatile mood, he promptly cast Placate.

Affected by Beatrice's Necklace, female Anthony only had eyes for her true self, indifferent to the fate of female Lumian.

Suppressing the urge to self-destruct, Lumian witnessed female Lumian teetering on the verge of collapse under his relentless onslaught, her expression contorted. Franca and Jenna's coughing intensified, hindering the use of their abilities. Their male counterparts seized the moment, forcing them to employ Mirror Substitution once again.

Franca was still okay, but Jenna likely had only one Mirror Substitution remaining.

Observing this, Lumian, his forehead ablaze, felt a mix of concern, nervousness, and confusion.

Where was Mirror Gardner?

In such a chaotic scenario, any attack—whether directed at Franca, Jenna, himself, or Anthony—would prove highly effective. He might even succeed in eliminating them one by one. After all, he was a Reaper.

Yet, Mirror Gardner refrained from attacking. Only the echoing, mocking laughter signaled his continued presence. He persisted in persuading Lumian and the others to surrender the black figurine and cease resisting.

“Hmph!”

Seizing the opportunity when Lumian’s assault momentarily slowed, female Lumian, pushed to her limits, invoked the Spell of Harrumph.

Two beams of white light struck Lumian’s body. His vision darkened, and he experienced the same sensation as his previous adversaries.

Crack!

A mirror shattered on Franca’s body, and Lumian materialized beside her.

As Lumian’s thoughts returned, a flurry of ideas raced through his mind.

After spreading the disease with the sick ravens, Mirror Gardner refrained from employing any other offensive abilities. Instead, he chose to hide in the shadows or conceal himself…

Wait, it didn’t begin with the disease spread by the sick ravens. It began with the emergence of male Franca and the other Mirror People…

Why didn’t he attack?

Considering my mirror self’s lack of the Flog boxing gloves, she probably doesn’t possess the Blood Emperor’s aura, Mr. Fool’s seal, or Termiboros… The Flog boxing gloves were crafted from the branch of the Tree of Shadow…

The mirror world, despite its apparent danger and terror, shouldn’t be incapable of mirroring the Flog boxing gloves…

Suddenly, Lumian had an epiphany.

These four Mirror People weren’t naturally formed in the mirror’s Fourth Epoch Trier. Mirror Gardner Martin had utilized his unique connection to this place to create them!

It was akin to an ability!

Mirror Gardner’s decision not to attack stemmed from his concerted effort to sustain the four Mirror People. He couldn’t engage in direct assault; his only

recourse was to conceal himself and use words to interfere with the enemy, disrupting their combat will!

As these realizations coursed through his mind, Lumian couldn't help but smile.

Dodging male Franca's attack and anticipating the teleportation of female Lumian, he retrieved the Eye of Truth obtained from Bouvard. Lumian then adorned the peculiar monocle, seemingly fashioned from flesh and blood.

It had the ability to pierce through illusions, perceive reality, and discern the light of spirituality!

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Chapter 489 - 489 Greed

489 Greed

Despite the severe corruption of the Eye of Truth, its ability to hear the voices of a hidden entity at any moment, and the risk of encountering uncontrollable negative effects, Lumian trusted that Fourth Epoch Trier, with its potent seal isolating external influences, provided a safeguard. Even the boons of evil gods couldn't trace back to their source, making it unlikely for him to hear the Hidden Sage's ravings.

In this realm, there should be no adverse effects when using the Eye of Truth, especially within the mirror's Fourth Epoch Trier.

However, Lumian acknowledged the potential presence of a fallen Angel from the Mystery Pryer pathway or remnants of corresponding divine power. Even with the Eye of Truth, there was a chance of hearing voices he shouldn't. Consequently, Lumian didn't plan to use it extensively. He intended to locate Mirror Gardner Martin and remove the mystical item when the opportunity presented itself.

Through the lens affixed to his eye, Lumian discerned nearly invisible spider silk swaying around Franca, subtly influencing male Jenna and the other Mirror People.

Similarly, male Franca had created a plethora of spider silks, utterly unaffected by the constraints of the term "Witch."

Lumian also took note of the fine snake-like black hair covering the area. They manifested and disappeared, delicately caressing every living being they touched. Their origin seemed to be the black pillar extending into the sky.

Concurrently, Lumian's left eye reflected Mirror Gardner Martin.

Concealed beside a grayish-white stone pillar, he seemed invisible.

Without hesitation, Lumian activated the black mark on his right shoulder, the fifth time since becoming an Ascetic.

With the Eye of Truth in place, he instantaneously vanished, reappearing behind Mirror Gardner.

The corners of Lumian's mouth curled up as he swung his right fist at his exposed foe, who had just realized his concealment had been shattered and had no time to react.

His hands were encased in iron-black boxing gloves adorned with multiple short thorns.

Flog!

In the midst of Mirror Gardner's attempt to lunge forward and transform into a burning-white spear, flying to the opposite side to distance himself, Lumian landed a punch behind his ear.

In a haste, Mirror Gardner could only duck, abruptly contorting as if he were boneless, attempting to somersault away.

Bang!

Lumian's right fist connected with Mirror Gardner's right shoulder.

The impact distorted the other's shoulder, causing his body to stagger, nearly losing balance.

Mirror Gardner's combat prowess proved formidable. Despite tumbling to the ground, he seized the opportunity to pivot.

He was unfazed by the potential of the white beams or being shot in the head; he still possessed Mirror Substitution!

Confronting Lumian, who lunged at him with blood still dripping from his iron-black boxing gloves, Mirror Gardner smiled, his eyes reflecting blatant greed.

This time, Lumian opted to trigger Greed!

In an instant, Mirror Gardner ignited with blazing-white flames, morphing into a spear charging at Lumian.

At this range, he doubted that Lumian could evade the impending attack.

Having committed to close combat, he had to bear the consequences—rendered unable to fully utilize Spirit World Traversal!

Lumian didn't attempt to dodge, nor did he plan to. He swiftly adjusted his posture, watching as the blazing-white spear collided with his right chest.

His defense against flames was robust. The blazing-white spear took nearly two seconds to burn through his skin and flesh.

Yet, Lumian maintained a smile on his face. The pain only contorted his countenance, a testament to the resilience of an Ascetic.

Anthony Reid's Placate had indeed restored Lumian's composure, but the psychological issues brought to light lingered for the time being.

With two resounding bangs, Lumian seized the opportunity to deliver a left and right punch to the burning-white spear.

He exploited every chance to kindle Mirror Gardner's desires and emotions.

Ultimately, the blazing-white spear pierced Lumian's right chest, propelling him more than ten meters through the air.

Lumian's smile retained a touch of frenzy. Adorned with a silver earring, he withdrew his right palm, pressed against the grievous wound on his chest, and slid downward.

The injury swiftly spread to his abdomen, and almost-white crimson flames erupted from Lumian's palm, consuming his mangled flesh.

He willingly accepted increased risk in the future to mitigate the impact of his injuries.

With that, his figure melded into the void.

Just as Mirror Gardner emerged from the dissipating blazing-white flaming spear, Lumian materialized behind him.

Bang! Bang!

Lumian swung his fists again, targeting Mirror Gardner's arms, denying him a chance to catch his breath.

He opted not to strike vital points, fearing that excessive damage might trigger Mirror Substitution.

As Mirror Gardner transformed into a blazing-white spear to assail Lumian, female Lumian, intending to "teleport" over to assist, stood stunned, as if temporarily losing autonomy.

Likewise, both male Franca and male Jenna exhibited similar reactions, as if their resemblance to real people had momentarily waned.

Franca and Jenna, in dire straits, seized the opportunity to catch their breath.

Although they didn't immediately comprehend the reason, they keenly sensed that Mirror Gardner held the key to the problem.

Lumian's assault on the leader had brought about such a change!

Franca, relying on her experience, swiftly instructed Jenna, "Give me that… Cough! Arrow!"

She needed the potent self-healing abilities of the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty to withstand the infectious disease and recuperate to a relatively healthy state within

a specific timeframe. Franca aimed to delay female Lumian and the other Mirror People, creating an optimal environment for Lumian to confront Mirror Gardner solo.

Her only hope rested on Lumian catalyzing positive changes before the infection and illness exacerbated, outpacing the effectiveness of her self-healing abilities.

Jenna had intended to use the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty herself. Despite having used it twice already—with another use risking a collapse of her body—she was willing to disregard the consequences in the current dire situation.

However, upon hearing Franca's request, she hesitated momentarily before tossing the obsidian arrow to Franca.

From Jenna's perspective, Franca, a Sequence 6 Demoness of Pleasure armed with numerous mystical items, possessed significantly more strength than herself. Thus, Franca's temporary recovery held greater benefit for the ongoing battle.

Franca caught the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty and plunged it into her chest.

Observing that female Lumian and the other Mirror People had regained their composure, becoming lively once again,

Franca's lake-blue eyes silently transformed to a fiery red. The rubber band securing her ponytail snapped as if corroded, allowing her flaxen-colored hair to billow in the air, enhancing her enchanting allure.

Her increasingly frequent coughs momentarily subsided, and the invisible "spider silk" surrounding her ceased its gradual, silent encroachment on male Franca, male Jenna, and female Lumian, no longer tightening and ensnaring them layer by layer.

Like mirror images, Franca and Jenna felt their bodies grow heavy, their limbs constricted.

From the outset, male Franca had been covertly using spider silk. Only when there was no way to further ensnare them layer by layer in secret did he reveal it.

In an instant, Franca and the others were immobilized. Female Lumian, who had just "teleported" over, was the least affected by the spider silk and was skilled in using flames. She swiftly activated Spirit World Traversal in a crimson light, heading towards Lumian and Mirror Gardner's battlefield.

Taking advantage of the momentary pause in female Anthony's actions, Anthony could finally counterattack.

Enduring the terrifying cough, dizziness, and fever, he raised the revolver purchased from the black market and pulled the trigger at the Mirror Person, clearly more charming than him.

At that moment, no one interrupted their "internecine attacks."

Amidst the gunshots, female Anthony shattered into numerous fragments.

Upon reappearing nearby, she didn't immediately rush to rescue Mirror Gardner. Instead, she continued pursuing Anthony amidst her soaring desire for achievement.

Amidst the sounds of flesh colliding, Lumian landed multiple punches on Mirror Gardner, sending waves of pain through the powerful Beyonder's head and stoking his anger.

His greed made him reluctant to abandon the other four Mirror People and the advantage his side enjoyed on other battlefields. However, if he didn't give up, he wouldn't be able to focus on dealing with Lumian. He found himself restricted in every way and faced a disadvantaged situation.

This was why Lumian had chosen to trigger his Greed!

Bang!

Lumian tightened his fists, delivering a powerful blow to Mirror Gardner.

Mirror Gardner crashed to the ground, instinctively summoning a swarm of crimson, almost white fireballs for protection.

This caught female Lumian off guard as she had just "teleported" over.

Unfazed by the nearly-white crimson fireballs, Lumian swiftly "teleported" toward Mirror Gardner.

The safest spot was, of course, where the caster stood!

Amidst the explosive chaos, Lumian gritted his teeth against the searing pain in his back and landed another punch on Mirror Gardner's face.

The short thorns on the iron-black boxing gloves pierced through skin and flesh.

Suddenly, Mirror Gardner Martin's gaze froze, blood streaming from his eyes, nose, and other wounds.

The intense greed within him erupted, not killing or knocking him out but weakening and disorienting him.

In this dazed state, whether it was female Lumian, male Franca, male Jenna, or female Anthony, they all froze in place. Their bodies rapidly faded, growing more translucent until they vanished.

Witnessing the scene, Lumian straightened up, removing the Flog boxing gloves. He tossed them to Franca and Jenna, ensuring each had one.

Franca noticed the residual blood and grasped Lumian's intent immediately.

Dipping her hand into the blood, she retrieved a mirror, ready to cast a curse.

Lumian had three reasons for opting for the Flog boxing gloves:

Firstly, the ability to stir desires wouldn't trigger Mirror Substitution. Secondly, as a mystical item, it could attract the attention of dangerous entities, causing unpredictable changes that might lead to opportunities amid the chaos.

Thirdly, it provided a chance to "collect" a curse's medium—the target's blood!

Even if his triggered greed couldn't be controlled, leading to Mirror Gardner's Mirror Substitution, Lumian planned to seize the moment when the other Mirror People were temporarily affected. He would throw the Flog boxing gloves to Franca and Jenna, aiding them in intercepting the attacks.

Repeatedly cursing with the possession of the blood, Lumian aimed to challenge how many times Mirror Substitution could be used and find an opportunity to sever the connection.

Flames erupted around Lumian as he transformed into a fireball, distancing himself from Mirror Gardner.

Just as he was about to remove the Eye of Truth, a peculiar sound caught his attention.

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Chapter 490 - 490 Sounds

490 Sounds

The strange sounds Lumian heard echoed from a far-off realm, an elusive destination beyond his grasp.

His heart tightened as he quickly removed the Eye of Truth, but the sounds remained.

Bam! Bam! Bam! The sounds reverberated as if two massive rocks collided. Lumian witnessed sparks flying, and dried leaves and branches catching fire. In the midst of the flames lay scattered bones. The cave, shrouded in darkness with an unknown depth, echoed with distant howls resembling wolves.

Thud! Thud! Thud! A leather drum's beats and ancient musical instruments resonated, creating a solemn, holy, and magnificent atmosphere for Lumian. The scene in his mind shifted to a vast wilderness with a towering altar. A figure, his face veiled with beaded coverings, a splendid headdress, and a flowing black robe, ascended to the highest point. Around him, people with demon-painted faces danced frenziedly to the drumbeat. Suddenly, the sky darkened, and a face appeared from the ominous clouds. The ritualist, with beads sliding aside, revealed a terrified expression.

A distant, haunting voice pierced the clouds, resonating through the desolate land. Lumian felt a profound shake in his mind and body. Before him stretched vast highlands, with withered trees, sparse grass, and yellow soil and rocks exposed. Gullies crisscrossed like wrinkles on an old man's face, separating silent towns. A massive river surged, majestic yet tainted with turbid yellow.

Ding. Dang. Ding. Dang. The sound, like pearls on a porcelain plate, was crisp and gentle, emanating from a peculiar wooden pavilion. The surrounding buildings burned fiercely, and shouts echoed from the river. Amidst the pleasant melody, the pavilion collapsed in flames, yet the performer continued unabated.

In the midst of the gentle singing, a woman in a peculiar dress stood on the platform, captivatingly expressing herself. Below her, people sat at various tables, savoring drinks under dim lights. Gunshots, like firecrackers, echoed outside what seemed to be a bar's dance floor, as citizens collapsed on the street. Fierce soldiers rushed in, stabbing the struggling ones with bayonets attached to their guns. Distant buildings burned, and flames soared into the sky.

These voices and images surged into Lumian's mind like a torrent, causing his eyes to redden. His head felt unusually swollen, as if it were on the brink of exploding, and his thoughts became a chaotic jumble.

Franca and Jenna, engrossed in their battle against Mirror Gardner Martin, remained oblivious to Lumian's unsettling state.

Franca took the lead, pressing the black flames against the mirror stained with the target's blood. She successfully saw the enemy—weakened by the eruption of desire. He succumbed to the engulfing black flames, inflicting damage to his Spirit Body.

Crack!

Mirror Gardner shattered, and his figure materialized nearby, his dazed eyes now alert.

Seizing the opportunity, Jenna, moving with remarkable speed, adjusted her makeup mirror stained with Mirror Gardner's blood. Pressing the black flames in her hand against it, s

Mirror Gardner was once again ignited by the Demoness's black flames and subjected to another fatal curse.

He shattered anew, reappearing beside the black pillar.

His right hand reached into his pocket, as if he wanted to take out a mirror and use nails, hair, blood, and other media to sever the connection between the source of the curse and himself.

However, Franca, who was also moving at high speed, leaned back and raised the mirror in her hand. It made contact with her other hand, holding the Flog boxing glove ablaze with black flames.

The flames erupted within the mirror, thwarting Mirror Gardner's attempt at curse-evading mirror magic.

The duo, Franca and Jenna, continued their intricate dance—one advancing, one retreating, one cursing, and the other awaiting their turn. It was a mesmerizing duet, a choreography of combat.

After enduring six curses, Mirror Gardner froze in front of a grayish-white stone pillar, not shattering like before.

In the silence of the black flames, he rapidly weakened, teetering on the brink of unconsciousness.

Seeing this, Franca discarded the Flog boxing gloves, opting for her Cannon Gun. She drew the weapon, pulled back the hammer, and took aim at the target.

Bang!

The iron-black bullet tore through Mirror Gardner's skull, shattering it into fragments.

His nearly headless body swayed briefly before collapsing to the ground.

As the corpse faded away, it left behind a peculiar mirror fragment, its surface nearly lightless as if coated with black paint.

Meanwhile, Anthony Reid, ever proficient at observation, detected Lumian's abnormal state. Racing towards him, the Psychiatrist attempted to Placate him. However, Lumian remained unresponsive, his face contorting further, blood vessels on his forehead bulging ominously.

"There's a situation here!" Anthony, noting Mirror Gardner's demise from the corner of his eye, swiftly informed Franca and Jenna. He hoped that the two Demonesses could find a way to address Lumian's unsettling condition.

However, an instant later, the pitch-black mirror fragment emitted a faint light.

The surroundings plunged into instant darkness, transmuting into a bizarre transparency, as if the entire world had transformed into a mirrored container.

Within the dark and shadowy confines of this mirror container, an unseen force seethed with rage, materializing the air and exerting pressure from every direction.

Though Franca, Jenna, and Anthony witnessed no visible or audible phenomena, an overwhelming fear gripped them. Their bodies felt as if plunged into an icy cavern, freezing instantaneously.

A faint sigh, distinctly feminine, resonated suddenly.

Nearby, the black pillar radiated a dim light. The tiny snake-like black hairs concealed in the void retracted, coalescing into a massive black-haired sphere, forming a protective barrier around the square.

Franca and the others experienced an immediate sense of tranquility. Fear released its grip on their bodies and minds, allowing them to move freely.

Meanwhile, Lumian's consciousness wrestled with an onslaught of voices and scenes, his rationality gradually eroding.

Suddenly, he heard a voice.

It was a male sigh.

Then, he saw a face and a figure—a man seated cross-legged in a serene room, adorned with a headdress and a blue robe.

Though handsome, the man's eyes betrayed profound sorrow and pain, lending him a withered appearance.

His gaze fixed on Lumian, comprehending the scenes unfolding, and he picked up a brown rod adorned with numerous white silk strands at one end, resting beside

him.

As the sigh persisted, the myriad sounds and images Lumian perceived vanished, replaced by overlapping shrill cries akin to curses.

While Lumian couldn't comprehend the language, the phrase echoed in his mind, infused with the purest knowledge, enabling him to grasp its meaning.

The voices converged into a torrent, laden with resentment and hatred.

"Celestial Master!"

…

At the base of the Deep Valley Quarry, the once busy hall now stood in partial ruins. The tumultuous activity had taken its toll, leaving many members of the Machinery Hivemind injured. Conscious of the need to avoid hindering their comrades' battles, these individuals strategically retreated.

Claude, the mechanical giant, abruptly halted his movements, his colossal ears resonating with overlapping roars.

Amidst the roars, a sigh descended from above, casting an eerie atmosphere upon the indistinct wilderness.

In that wild expanse, numerous ethereal figures lingered, occasionally gazing at the sky and emitting haunting screams.

Observing this mysterious transformation, Archbishop Horamick refrained from seizing the opportunity to attack Claude directly. Instead, he swiftly withdrew from the crumbling hall, leading the remaining members of the Machinery Hivemind away from the illusory wilderness.

The cybernetic eyes of the mechanical giant, with one resembling a ruby and the other an emerald, suddenly dimmed.

It appeared as if intelligence had deserted him. Slowly turning around, Claude stepped into the surreal "wilderness," seemingly intent on joining the lingering figures.

Midway through, the mechanical giant turned to regard Archbishop Horamick and his companions, gears spinning loudly.

An indescribable smile graced the face comprising multiple metallic components.

In the next instant, the mechanical giant retracted his gaze, resuming his forward journey.

His figure gradually took on an illusionary quality, merging with the mysterious wilderness until both vanished into the unknown.

…

In the depths of the Fourth Epoch Trier, adjacent to the wall-like grayish-white fog, Magician and Justice materialized, their intense gazes fixed upon Lady Moon. She had lost her veil, revealing a vacant expression.

The bestowed of the Great Mother, the lady who had nurtured a deity, stood in front of the gray fog, her shadow tainted by char.

Magician and Justice were surprised to see this.

Almost simultaneously, the wall-like grayish-white fog expanded, pulsating like a beating heart.

Almost simultaneously, an imposing aura, one that seemed to look down upon all existence, permeated the surroundings. It quelled the earlier sigh that had echoed through the air.

The grayish-white fog in the vicinity heightened its intensity, spreading in all directions once more, thickening the gray fog throughout the entirety of Fourth Epoch Trier.

“Him?”

“So it’s Him?”

Justice and Magician exchanged silent whispers. Unaffected by the adverse consequences targeting others, they persisted in their actions.

The dazed Lady Moon immediately found herself shrouded in resplendent starlight.

…

In the wilderness, Snarner Einhorn and Diest, the President of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, continued their struggle to restrain Vermonda Sauron—a Calamity Giant, an Angel who had lost control. Their efforts, however, were met with fierce counterattacks, forcing Them into a gradual retreat, unable to capitalize on the situation.

Amidst the chaos, the gray fog shrouding the ruins of Fourth Epoch Trier stirred violently, as if the very city had awakened.

The turbulent fog swiftly coalesced into a spear-like form, a weapon capable of shattering mountain peaks. It hurtled towards the captive Vermonda Sauron.

In an instant, the spear, crafted from the gray fog, erupted into violent flames, taking on a violet hue. It exuded an aura of supremacy, as if it aimed to conquer all in its path.

Witnessing this surreal phenomenon, whether it was Snarner Einhorn, Diest, Vermonda Sauron, or their allies, it was as though they beheld a city enshrouded in fog. A sense of awe overwhelmed their bodies and minds, dissuading any inclination to resist.

The majestic purple flaming spear traversed a significant distance, impaling Vermonda Sauron—the Calamity Giant yet to regain mobility. His chest rent open, the colossal being was pinned to the wilderness.

As the purple flames dissipated, a figure stood up from a genuflecting position.

Clad in blood-stained black armor, adorned with long red hair, the youth exuded a handsome yet haunting presence. Rotting wounds marred both sides of his face, and a vivid red mark resembling a banner flag adorned his forehead.

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Chapter 491 - 491 Unexpected “Helper”

491 Unexpected “Helper”

The gray fog encircling Fourth Epoch Trier extended into the wilderness, as if intercepting and obstructing an unseen force.

Fighting the impulse to surrender while stepping back, Their eyes fixated on the figure of a young man clad in blood-stained black armor, adorned with long red hair and a conspicuous red mark between his brows.

Their nerves tensed as a name echoed in their minds:

Medici!

Red Angel Medici!

He was a king from ancient times. As early as the Fourth Epoch, or even during the catastrophic demise of the Third Epoch, he held the title of King of Angels.

Kings of Angels were Archangels beyond Sequence 1, yet They hadn’t attained the level of a Sequence 0 true god. Through the consumption of multiple Sequence 1 potions or the possession of the key to deity status, However, having something missing prevented Them from taking that crucial step.

The Red Angel was among the eight Kings of Angels who had once served the Ancient Sun God. Though He met his end at the hands of Alista Tudor during the Fourth Epoch, leading to the latter’s ascent as Blood Emperor, the King of Angels hadn’t completely perished. Transformed into an evil spirit in a hidden sanctuary, He survived and reemerged a few years ago, resuming His activities.

As Angels of the Hunter pathway, Snarner and Diest grew increasingly apprehensive about the situation. They suspected that Medici might have already acquired a Conqueror Beyonder characteristic, ascending once again to a Sequence 1 Archangel.

While devising a plan to obtain Vermonda Sauron’s Conqueror Beyonder characteristic, Snarner and Diest remained cautious of the possible involvement of the ancient king. When Albus Medici disclosed his name, Their vigilance heightened, and They kept a constant watch on him. Only when the operation was unexpectedly hastened, and the Red Angel showed no signs of breaching the seal, nor did Albus Medici display any abnormal behavior, did they finally ease up.

But just at that critical juncture, Red Angel Medici appeared!

With a terror-inducing aura that subjugated everything, He soared majestically from the depths of Fourth Epoch Trier. Seizing the opportunity, he dealt a severe blow to Vermonda Sauron with a single strike.

Medici's disdainful gaze swept across Snarner and Diest as He casually tossed an item to the struggling Calamity Giant, Vermonda Sauron.

It was a blood-stained umbilical cord.

The moment the umbilical cord left Medici's hand, it burst into flames, emitting a golden light resembling a miniature sun.

Above surface Trier, the sun, engulfed by hurricanes, lightning, and torrential rain, suddenly emitted a blinding light, tearing through the calamitous scene.

A chubby baby, seemingly crafted from pure sunlight, soared out of the tear, transforming into a golden sun hurtling towards Red Swan Castle in Quartier éraste.

The scorching sun tore through the sky, liquefying the spires, walls, and floor of the ancient castle. It plunged into the depths of the underground maze and into the bronze coffin.

Wherever it passed, darkness dissipated, and the withered hearts turned to ashes. Elros Einhorn, stationed outside the underground palace, instinctively shut her eyes, her body trembling uncontrollably.

High in the sky, The Hanged Man didn't pursue the self-destructing sun. Instead, he hovered above the storm, his gaze fixed on Red Swan Castle, which bore a massive wound. It remained unknown what he contemplated.

The people around him and the mutants shared a similar reaction.

The sun descended from the vortex, illuminating the entire wilderness and Fourth Epoch Trier as if it were daytime.

It caught up to the burning umbilical cord and enveloped the severely injured Archangel, Vermonda Sauron.

Sunlight erupted, and darkness vanished. The Calamity Giant, formed by a Conqueror's loss of control, emitted a tragic cry and swiftly dissipated, undergoing profound purification.

The infant that had transformed into a sun ceased to exist. Only the remnants of its power burned fiercely, emitting light and warmth.

Snarner, Diest, and the other powerhouses turned sideways, steeling themselves to withstand the impact of the sunlight.

…

In the brilliantly lit Fourth Epoch Trier,

Voisin Sanson and Madame Pualis, entangled in intense combat, simultaneously closed their eyes, as if unaccustomed to the direct sunlight.

Upon reopening their eyes, they found themselves separated, no longer able to see each other. One stood in a square adorned with stone pillars, while the other perched on a collapsed black building.

“Wh…” The two bestowed, who had already tasted the power of godhood, were momentarily taken aback before realizing that Fourth Epoch Trier had undergone a transformation due to the impact of the golden sunlight, leading to a shift in direction and spatial disarray.

…

Gardner Martin, donned in a full-body silver armor, could already discern the dense grayish-white fog ahead, resembling an impenetrable wall. A surge of joy coursed through him.

What he desired, what he sought, was within reach.

Suddenly, sunlight pierced through, illuminating the nocturnal environment.

Instinctively, Gardner Martin shut his eyes and decelerated.

Then, a cracking sound reverberated.

It emanated from his neck.

In surprise, Gardner Martin lowered his head, acclimating to the sunlight.

Accompanied by an intense and peculiar pain, he witnessed the widening gap between his head and chest. Blood spurted from the stump of his neck, staining the area crimson.

He also beheld his white, bloody spine.

How could this be… This thought flashed through Gardner Martin’s mind, a mix of shock and fear.

He had always believed himself to be the favored one, the special one. Hence, under the watchful eyes of the great will deep within Fourth Epoch Trier, even upon entering 13 Avenue du Marché, he assumed he would only suffer minor corruption. He could wield a certain power from Fourth Epoch Trier to a limited extent without transforming into a terrifying monster like Olson, whose head and body had been severed.

Yet now, his head had detached from his body, dragging along his spine. Just as he was on the verge of approaching the great will!

Lady Moon, adorned with brown wings and bird-like claws, crumpled amidst cascading silver lightning.

Initially, she descended into madness, morphing into a bewildered monster. This marked the onset of the Plague Storm from the Spectator pathway, succeeded by Magician's nine attacks from nine directions.

As sunlight bathed the scene, Magician instinctively closed her eyes. With a sweep of her right hand, the void contorted, shaping into a sealed dark sphere that encased her, Justice, and the swiftly fading Lady Moon. Together, they withstood the ensuing anomalies as a unified entity.

…

Within the sphere woven from thick black hair, Jenna, Franca, and Anthony felt the tumultuous storm and various catastrophes outside, causing the ground to quake and the sphere to sway.

In an instant, time slowed, and the snake-like black hair composing the dark sphere swiftly split open, revealing a beam of sunlight above.

In the sunlight, Jenna and Franca seemed to discern an ethereal female voice.

"Reconcile with your mirror self…"

With these words, the snake-like black hair disintegrated entirely, no longer coalescing into a sphere. It retreated into the void.

Franca and the others found themselves surrounded by a layer of dark glass, silently shattering and falling under the sunlight.

The lights and figures in the nearby buildings vanished, and Jenna and the others returned to the dead silence reminiscent of when they first entered the ruins.

After adjusting to the sunlight, Anthony immediately looked at Lumian and noticed that the blood vessels on his companion's face had faded. His contorted expression gradually eased.

"Are you alright?" Anthony inquired, employing Placate.

Upon hearing the roars, Lumian's mind was filled by the man's sighs in the dark room. The overwhelming knowledge that gripped him in corruption had subsided. He no longer felt like his head was about to burst or lose his rationality.

He quickly returned to normal, no longer hearing the sigh or seeing the withered man in strange attire.

“I survived,” Lumian replied to Anthony’s question.

Simultaneously, he thought, Is that the Celestial Master the Armored Shadow mentioned?

Using the Eye of Truth here is even more dangerous than the outside world.

Franca gathered the items, picked up Flog and other belongings, and threw out the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty.

“What happened to you just now?”

“The aftereffects of using the Eye of Truth.” Lumian took the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty and stabbed it into his chest. Surveying the area, he said, “Let’s quickly collect our items and relocate.”

Previously, he had used Flog, hoping to attract the attention of dangerous entities, thereby creating chaos to find an opportunity. Now that Mirror Gardner had been dealt with, it was crucial to move to avoid new threats.

Jenna, with no time to ponder the meaning of reconciling with her mirror self, placed the bone flute, wooden box, and other items in the blood-stained cloak. Following Lumian, Franca, and Anthony, she sprinted in a random direction around the black pillar.

…

Beneath the blistering sunlight, the purple flames constituting Vermonda Sauron’s flesh and blood flickered out one by one. The anguished faces representing the diverse Sauron family members disappeared sequentially.

The Red Angel’s form abruptly expanded, resembling a diminutive mountain peak.

Brandishing a broadsword condensed from purple flames, He advanced with a step and swung it at the dying Vermonda Sauron.

Having regained their composure, Snarner, Diest, and the other formidable beings were not inclined to yield. They acted in unison, intervening to impede Him.

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Chapter 492 - 492 Pride

492 Pride

Red Angel Medici stood unfazed amidst the onslaught from Snarner, Diest, and the other formidable adversaries. His focus unwavering, He channeled His conquering will to subdue Vermonda Sauron, wielding a broadsword ablaze with purple flames, ready to cleave through the menacing foe.

Seizing the opportune moment, with the uncontrollable Calamity Giant at its weakest, Medici aimed to deliver the final, fatal blow!

Suddenly, a radiant light burst forth before the eyes of Snarner, Diest, and the rest. It was pure sunlight, banishing the darkness and cleansing the surroundings of filth and the stench of blood. The two Angels, now in their Mythical Creature forms, appeared as if exposed to the brilliance of the sun at close range.

From within the luminous glow emerged a holy and beautiful woman, draped in a white robe adorned with golden threads—Trier's guardian angel, Saint Viève!

She shielded the Red Angel from the relentless attacks of the other powerhouses.

Simultaneously, Medici, clad in blood-stained black armor, descended like a mountain. Plunging the purple broadsword into Vermonda Sauron's skull, which showed signs of melting under the intense sunlight, Medici marked the decisive moment in the battle.

Boom!

The implosion absorbed the surrounding flames, hurricanes, lightning, hail, and sunlight into the Calamity Giant's colossal form. The once tumultuous wilderness now stood cleansed, except for the remnants of invisible flames in the sky and a vast golden vortex.

Boom!

Reaching its limit, the implosion rapidly expanded, unleashing a barrage of projectiles. A violent hurricane tore through Vermonda Sauron's charred skeleton, casting darkness upon the once brightly illuminated landscape.

A torrential downpour accompanied by countless bolts of lightning and thunderclaps ensued, marking the demise of an Angel—a Conqueror.

Snarner, Diest, and the other powerhouses, breaking through Saint Viève's obstruction, witnessed the scene unfold. Vermonda Sauron's body disintegrated,

and Red Angel Medici, now in the form of a Mythical Creature, brandished His purple-flamed broadsword. He turned disdainfully, mocking those who dared challenge Him.

Snarner Einhorn narrowed His eyes, evaluating the situation. Swiftly transforming into a blaze, He ascended into the air, disappearing into the colossal vortex of formless flames.

Realizing that even with the support of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, victory against Red Angel and Saint Viève was unattainable, He chose to retreat.

The former was undoubtedly a Sequence 1 Conqueror. Moreover, in this unique setting, He appeared capable of tapping into the formidable power hidden within the Fourth Epoch Trier to some extent!

In that situation, He'd fall back and escape if needed; otherwise, He could meet His end right here!

Snarner dashed into the massive vortex in midair, while Diest morphed into a beam of light and shot into the sky. He raced out of the wilderness with Tony Twain, chasing after the Einhorn family's Weather Warlock.

As Angels of the Hunter pathway, Their judgments and choices were strikingly similar.

Red Angel Medici, observing Their departure, chuckled and muttered to Himself, "The heroic escape of your descendant is reminiscent of yours many years ago."

His attention then turned to Saint Viève with a smile.

"Now, we can proceed to the final part of the plan and eliminate the bestowed of the Outer Deities."

Saint Viève nodded in agreement, emitting a blazing light as She flew towards Fourth Epoch Trier, enveloped in a shroud of gray fog.

…

In the depths of Fourth Epoch Trier, alongside a wall-like grayish-white fog, Bernadette Gustav, the eldest daughter of Emperor Roselle, fixated Her gaze on a seal adorned with countless mysterious symbols.

In Her palm, a faint golden figure materialized once more through the viscous light emanating from a golden lamp that resembled a miniature lamp.

It said to Bernadette, "Take another step forward and find a monster to 'replace' your wish using the method I told you. I can use Under-the-table Transaction to help you obtain something from here to counterbalance the corruption affecting your father."

Bernadette remained steadfast, not advancing. Calmly, she responded, “I entered this place to analyze the seal and understand how the various corruptions have intricately balanced themselves through years of mergers and confrontations. That sigh was merely an unexpected bonus.”

“Time is of the essence. If you don’t act more assertively, once the Mother Goddess of Depravity breaches the barrier, your father will truly transform into a monster,” warned the distorted, blurry, pale-golden figure.

Undeterred, Bernadette continued absorbing knowledge related to the seal, her focus unwavering.

The pale-golden figure fell silent and retreated into the peculiar lamp without making further persuasion.

…

Gardner Martin’s head, donned with a silver-white helmet, soared into the air, carrying his blood-soaked spine with it.

Glancing down, he witnessed a broadsword of light materializing in his hand.

He—no, his body could use the Pride Armor’s Hurricane of Light again!

However, this time, the target appeared to be him—specifically, his head!

Is this the traitorous curse? My own body turning against my head… Why another betrayal? Could it be linked to constant wearing of the Pride Armor? Gardner Martin’s pupils dilated, fear gripping his heart.

In a desperate attempt to mitigate the impending impact of the Hurricane of Light, he condensed numerous crimson, almost white fireballs. The explosions around him aimed to lessen the force of the onslaught. Simultaneously, he sank his consciousness into his glabella, seeking a connection with the great will, praying for its protective intervention.

…

Beside the shattered corpse of Vermonda Sauron, Red Angel Medici extended His right hand, observing as a beam of light, reminiscent of iron and blood, emanated from the Conqueror’s body. It landed on the damaged skull cradled in His palm.

In that moment, Gardner Martin’s desperate shout and plea reached Him.

Red Angel chuckled dismissively, paying no heed to the pawn that had served its purpose and was now deemed expendable.

Gardner Martin had not submitted to the great will from the depths of Fourth Epoch Trier but to Red Angel Himself!

Over the past few years, Red Angel Medici had lurked in the shadows, orchestrating a scheme to obtain the Sauron family's lost Sequence 1 Conqueror Beyonder characteristic. Leveraging His uniqueness and level, He assisted numerous members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order in maintaining their lucidity and rationality in the face of corruption at 13 Avenue du Marché. They did not transform into monsters but were only slightly affected.

Using His uniqueness, Medici disguised Himself as a great will from the depths of Fourth Epoch Trier, He manipulated the Iron and Blood Cross Order members to grasp the underground situation and pinpoint Vermonda Sauron's exact location.

During this process, He uncovered the issue with the Mirror People but refrained from interference, pushing the plan forward. His intention was to involve Trier's evil god bestowed and utilize them to divert the attention of other factions while extracting corresponding special value and uncovering hidden problems.

As the plan unfolded, Philip informed Gardner Martin about Lumian Lee, who had undoubtedly prayed to the great will.

Seizing this opportunity, Red Angel Medici refined the plan, bestowing Gardner Martin with a divine vision. This allowed him to acquire significant mysticism knowledge and "conceive" the Hostel ritual.

The ritual, designed to create minimal disturbance and increase the chances of success, aimed to "fool" Trier's most formidable evil god bestowed into Fourth Epoch Trier. The ultimate goal: capture them all and purify them in one fell swoop!

Observing the Beyonder characteristic rapidly condense in His hand, Red Angel Medici raised His gaze to the gradually shrinking golden vortex.

The smile on His face, adorned with decaying wounds, deepened.

Whether it was the Hostel plan or the original strategy involving the special mirror world, both required the cooperation of a faction and the assistance of a true god.

Enter the Eternal Blazing Sun!

Indeed, how can the sun, intolerant of darkness, filth, and humbleness, genuinely collaborate with the Mother, the symbol of depravity and evil?

Having ascended to godhood and abandoned His original Lord in the past, He had chosen this path precisely because He refused to submit to another deity. Why would He now bow to the Mother Goddess of Depravity, an Outer Deity, a different entity altogether?

His needs and acknowledgments were reserved for a collaborator. And I willingly embraced this role. Even if I were to become a Great Old One in the future, I vowed to honor this agreement and stand together in defense as a collaborator.

With the Ruler of War's divine spot vacant and Cheek in dire straits, I emerged as the most likely candidate to ascend to true godhood and attain the status of a Great Old One in a short span.

The Sun didn't repent or return to the original Lord's side, nor did He submit to the Mother Goddess of Depravity who reigned above the gods. Instead, He chose the path of enduring pressure and facing the worst possible outcome to support a new Great Old One.

This decision may have seemed nearly the worst, yet He embraced it wholeheartedly.

Because He is the proud Sun.

Through the golden vortex, the Red Angel's gaze surveyed the gradually calming storm above Trier, noting a significant decrease in the frequency of lightning.

His smile grew even more smug.

As expected, Tyrant and the old dragon have grasped the entirety of the situation. They are no longer seizing the opportunity to confront the Sun, rendering the entity that had inherited most of the original Lord's legacy effectively useless.

They, too, yearn for the emergence of a new Great Old One.

Red Angel Medici directed His gaze to His palm, where an iron-black object, resembling a blood-stained crown, was on the verge of taking shape.

Recollections of past events and the betrayal He had only comprehended a few years ago flooded His mind. It all stemmed from His unwavering loyalty to that Lord of 2,401 years.

His choice was unforgiving. He chose to collaborate with the Eternal Blazing Sun.

This was because He was also a proud King of Angels, once the most loyal Red Angel.

As the Sequence 1 Conqueror Beyonder characteristic fully condensed, Medici chuckled and declared, "The curse of your useless descendants can end now."

He pressed the blood-stained iron crown, formed by the broken skull in His hand, between His eyebrows and devoured it without concocting a potion.

Vermonda Sauron's blood and shattered corpse, scattered across the wilderness, seemed to come alive, pouring into the Red Angel's body like a torrent.

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Chapter 493 - 493 Crimson Hell

493 Crimson Hell

Sprinting through the silent, desolate, and dilapidated Fourth Epoch Trier, Lumian's abdominal injuries came under control, thanks to his potent self-healing abilities. It seemed they wouldn't worsen any time soon.

Fortunately, the four of them remained relatively close, avoiding the perils of getting "lost" or separated from the group.

As Lumian contemplated finding a place to hide, a large number of violent fragments of light materialized in front of them.

It was evident that the power emanating from the Fourth Epoch Trier had been transferred from a distance.

Lumian and the others were no strangers to this terrifying storm of light. They had encountered it once in the wilderness, courtesy of Gardner Martin's silver-white full-body armor.

Gardner Martin? Lumian halted in time, wisely refraining from rushing into the weakened but still perilous storm of light.

Franca's expression became complicated, uncertain whether this encounter was luck or misfortune.

As the light subsided, she witnessed Gardner Martin's head, a long, blood-stained spine trailing behind. His armor was incomplete, his face covered in charred and hideous wounds. The helmet had caved in, revealing his grayish-white brain faintly. His eyes appeared empty, unfocused, and filled with dizziness, as if he had experienced an exaggerated shock from the intense impact.

Gardner Martin's adversary stood as his silver-white armor-clad body, lacking a head. The neck stump was drenched in blood.

Raising his hands, he condensed a massive axe made of light.

Though incapable of unleashing the Hurricane of Light, it proved sufficient for ordinary combat.

Franca gazed at the familiar yet unfamiliar tragic face and exhaled. She took out a mirror and reflected it.

In that moment, Gardner Martin's thoughts returned to normal. Aside from his headless body, he saw Franca's beautiful lake-colored eyes, appearing calm.

Franca placed her right hand, engulfed in black flames, on the mirror reflecting Gardner Martin's head and whispered, "I'll liberate you."

Gardner Martin, still reeling from the immense blow to his body, found himself instantly enveloped by black flames, his spirituality igniting from within.

Struggling to scream, he discovered his voice stifled. Desiring aid from the great will and attempting to utilize his uniqueness to summon Fourth Epoch Trier's bestowed power, he encountered only silence.

With a whoosh, the headless Gardner Martin wielded the radiant axe, striking the head's face. The missing visor shattered, and the axe cleaved into the skull.

Lumian, having taken a few steps to the side, raised his right hand, unleashing a crimson fireball, almost white, like a cannonball aimed at Gardner Martin's sunken skull.

The fireball landed on the crack, exploding and tearing apart the unprotected grayish-white brain.

Under the relentless assault from his body, lover, and subordinate, Gardner Martin's head and eyes bulged, filled with hatred and pain.

As the silver helmet landed, Gardner Martin, still clad in armor, spun around, raising the glowing axe and charging at Lumian and the others.

With each step, his stature appeared to expand, and by the time he stood near the headless Gardner Martin, his clothes and pants strained against his growing form.

The power of an Ascetic!

During his time at the edge of Fourth Epoch Trier, Lumian had strategically "Compressed" some of his strength. Now, he was unleashing it.

Although the accumulated strength wasn't overwhelming, it had visibly transformed him. Coupled with the enhanced speed, agility, and physique granted by the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty, Lumian was confident in withstanding the impending attack from the silver armor-clad Gardner Martin.

Just as the collision became imminent, Lumian deftly sidestepped, allowing the axe of light to cleave through the air. He swiftly punched the headless Gardner's wrist.

With a resounding bang, the headless Gardner discarded the radiant axe, clenched his metal-gloved fist, and delivered a forceful strike against Lumian.

Lumian's body swayed slightly, while the headless Gardner stood like an unwavering mountain peak.

Retracting his left fist, Lumian released it, swinging it in the air to alleviate the pain as he prepared to strike with his right fist.

At that moment, Franca, having vanished while Lumian approached the headless Gardner, reappeared behind the enemy clad in silver armor.

Raising the iron-black ring on her left thumb, her eyes illuminated like lightning.

Unsure if the headless body could still be affected by Psychic Piercing, Franca believed it should be possible. As long as there was a spirit, Psychic Piercing could exert its influence.

In an instant, the headless Gardner froze. The exposed skin and flesh on his neck and chest twitched.

Jenna, who had been slower due to reciting incantations and using materials, arrived as well. Revealing herself at a distance from the headless Gardner, she caused black flames to condense and fly out, landing on the enemy's bloody neck, unprotected by the silver armor. This ignited the spirit in a state of pain.

Thud! Thud! Thud! Anthony Reid sprinted past Jenna, closing the gap between him and the headless Gardner.

Then, his pupils turned vertical, a faint golden hue coloring them.

Frenzy!

Suddenly, flames erupted from the headless body in the silver armor, scorching its flesh.

Upon witnessing this, Lumian leaned back, kicking the ground with his right foot to "fly" away from the headless Gardner. Simultaneously, he condensed crimson fireballs, nearly white, around him.

The fireballs whizzed through the unprotected neck and into the body, detonating from the inside out with a resounding rumble. The silver armor trembled violently as the headless body was reduced to charred flesh and blood, "painting" the inner layer of the armor.

Boom!

Lumian, propelled backward by the explosion's waves, landed on the ground.

Simultaneously, the silver-armored mountain collapsed to the ground.

Just as Lumian rose and prepared to commend Franca and the others for their coordinated effort, he suddenly sensed the sky transforming into a deep shade of

blood-red.

However, it wasn't rain. It was flames—blazing-white flames.

Within this fiery deluge, droplets of blood accompanied the falling fire.

Franca swiftly rolled towards a nearby building, utilizing its extended roof as cover from the scorching-white fire rain. Lumian, Jenna, and Anthony followed suit.

White-hot flames and drops of bright red blood fell at an increasingly rapid pace, painting the surroundings in hues of red and setting buildings ablaze.

The burning structures melded into a sea of flames.

Contemplating whether to activate the Blood Emperor's aura for potential solutions to the unfolding horror, Lumian's eyes caught sight of Madam Magician, clad in a knot shirt and beige dress.

A sigh of relief escaped him.

Resplendent starlight illuminated the scene, and they vanished from the street, taking with them the Pride Armor, Gardner Martin's corpse, and various items scattered on the ground, all converging into the diminishing golden vortex in the sky.

…

Blazing-white flames, mixed with blood, cascaded down, but they passed through Bernadette Gustav's form, unable to ignite Her.

It was as if the Angel existed beyond their reach.

Her focus remained on the dense gray fog and the diverse corruptions within the city. After a moment, Her body transformed into transparency, eventually disintegrating into a pile of bubbles that mirrored the flames.

As the bubbles dispersed, so did Bernadette, departing from Fourth Epoch Trier.

…

Two elegant women with captivating eyes approached the wall-like grayish-white fog, only to realize that the sky above was tainted with blood, and dense white flames, resembling raindrops, descended.

Just as they considered seeking shelter, a golden sun suddenly reflected in their eyes.

In the blink of an eye, they were entirely purified.

Elsewhere in Fourth Epoch Trier, the Hostel residents who had ventured within were already undergoing abnormalities. Some perished, transformed into monsters, others were engulfed in incandescent white flames, and a few caught sight of the sun.

…

Madame Pualis discovered a relatively intact asymmetrical house amidst the chaos.

Observing distant sunlight and blazing-white flames setting nearby buildings ablaze, she hesitated to seek refuge within the door due to the deep, terrifying darkness within.

Suddenly, her head throbbed violently, and she heard an almost illusory cry of a baby.

It was the cry of her child, a fragment of memory echoing nearby.

Driven by the mystical sensation, Madame Pulias ventured into the infinite darkness beyond the door.

…

Amidst the incandescent white flames that descended, Voisin Sanson, positioned in the collapsed square, was set ablaze. However, he promptly reverted to his original state.

Soon after, he witnessed his impending purification by the sun.

In that moment, his peripheral vision captured a figure emerging from behind a grayish-white stone pillar at the square's edge.

It was a diaphanous, indistinct lizard-like creature.

The creature's cold eyes silently observed him.

…

In Fourth Epoch Trier, numerous buildings were engulfed by incandescent white flames, their facades now tainted red by rainwater transformed from blood and charred black by the inferno.

Red Angel Medici, donned in blood-stained black armor, emerged from the wilderness into the resplendent city, now permeated with the air of destruction.

He navigated through the charred and collapsed houses, moving amidst falling white flames and beneath blood-like raindrops, a visible smile gracing His face.

The two decaying wounds on His face, exposing the bones beneath, had already started to heal, leaving behind marks resembling a mouth.

Splash.

Flames and blood cascaded from the sky, casting a fiery glow upon Fourth Epoch Trier and shrouding the ruins, transforming it into a crimson hell.

After 2,081 years, Medici had once again ascended to the title of King of Angels.

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Chapter 494 - 494 “Stolen” Information

494 “Stolen” Information

The looming dark clouds over Trier had vanished, replaced by the glow of the crimson moonlight that bathed every nook and cranny of the city, casting reflections in the calf-deep puddles below.

On the rooftop of an unknown building, Lumian and Franca materialized at the edge. Before them, Magician hovered in the void, accompanied by a stack of items. Jenna and Anthony, encased in what seemed like dark glass, fixated their gazes elsewhere.

Without prompting from Lumian, Magician let out a weary sigh and divulged, “Medici has ascended once again to King of Angels. Once hailed as the most formidable Conspirer, He has returned.”

“The Red Angel who once served the Ancient Sun God and met His demise at the hands of the Blood Emperor, Medici?” Lumian’s reaction was a mix of surprise and inevitability.

How could the Angel of the Hunter pathway not be entangled in the affairs of the Sauron family’s secrets and Fourth Epoch Trier?

The existence of Albus Medici was irrefutable proof!

Lumian, previously under the impression that the clandestine nature of the Hostel ritual and its premature commencement had prevented the Red Angel from exacting influence, now realized Medici was apparently the ultimate victor.

Madam Magician, in a relatively composed manner, chuckled and remarked, “No need for the latter half of that statement. It makes it sound like you’re provoking Him, especially with the Blood Emperor’s aura mark still imprinted on your right hand.”

Franca, having heard Lumian’s mention of the Medici family, inquired out of curiosity, “What did the Red Angel do?”

As she spoke, her eyes flitted towards Jenna and Anthony, only to realize they were oblivious to the conversation with Madam Magician, as if trapped in another dimension.

Behind Franca, the water that had pooled on the rooftop began its gradual retreat, the drain's sloshing sounds echoing.

Magician sighed.

"When the Einhorn family's Angel, the powerhouses of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, and the Sealed Artifacts, along with the unique powers of the Fourth Epoch Trier, were on the brink of killing the out-of-control Vermonda Sauron, He seized the moment to terminate the entire battle and acquire the Sequence 1 Beyonder characteristic.

"The blood-colored sky and the fiery rain you witnessed were the aftermath of His return as a King of Angels in Fourth Epoch Trier."

That explains it… Lumian, recalling the situation, gained a firsthand understanding of the dread and power wielded by a King of Angels.

At that moment, his feet were bare, lacking shoes and socks—the consequence of being transported to the painted world while asleep. The painted footwear he later wore was evidently short-lived.

Pondering the recent events, he inquired, "Was that roaring giant the out-of-control Vermonda Sauron?"

No wonder the roar had nearly rendered them unconscious. Thankfully, Mr. Fool's gray fog had provided protection.

"That's correct. Vermonda Sauron's loss of control and descent into the sealed underground marked the beginning of the Sauron family's downfall. While many details remain shrouded in mystery, the overall picture is becoming clearer."

Angel of the Einhorn family… Lumian connected the dots, realizing that one of Elros Einhorn and the Iron and Blood Cross Order's primary objectives was to break the seal, hunt the out-of-control Vermonda Sauron, and obtain the Sequence 1 Beyonder characteristic. Lumian nodded thoughtfully and asked with uncertainty, "Did these powerhouses enter Fourth Epoch Trier through the Hostel ritual?"

"Most of them accessed it through the underground leakage of Salle de Bal Brise triggered by the Hostel ritual. The representative from the Einhorn family entered through the leakage deep within the underground palace of Red Swan Castle, but it's essentially a result of the chain reaction caused by the Hostel ritual. As for how the Red Angel entered, that remains unknown to me." Magician's expression turned serious. "However, there's reason to believe that the Hostel ritual was orchestrated by the Red Angel. He manipulated the Iron and Blood Cross Order and Gardner Martin. Truly befitting the entity that once guided and watched over Amon."

Lumian felt a surge of enlightenment, finding that many previously confusing details now made more sense.

Franca's emotions were a mix of complexity.

Madam Magician, glancing at them, offered consolation, "Regardless of the circumstances, our actions accelerated the Hostel ritual, mitigating the damage this plan inflicted on Trier. In the entire market district, only a handful of night duty personnel from places like Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman and Rist Docks bore the brunt of the disaster. Some soldiers lost their lives in other areas. Overall, the impact was mainly financial. Our efforts were not in vain."

She smiled self-deprecatingly and gazed up at the sky.

"The only unexpected thing was that They chose to cooperate."

They… Lumian and Franca thought inwardly.

Eager to uncover who the Red Angel collaborated with, they realized that Madam Magician had no intention of revealing that information.

The lady's eyes traveled over the silver-white full-body armor, Gardner Martin's remains, and the items Jenna had discarded during the battle. She smiled and offered, "I'll assist you in handling the corresponding corruption and throw in specific usage information as a bonus for this mission.

"By the way, I recommend you temporarily overlook the corruption on the bone flute. It can produce peculiar effects. With Gardner Martin's Beyonder characteristics, you don't necessarily need Philip's. Plus, your unique attributes can effectively counteract the negative effects of the bone flute."

The last sentence was directed at Lumian.

Observing Lumian's nod, Magician continued, "This wooden box serves as an under-the-table transaction. It's not meant for combat, but it can resolve many issues that violence can't under specific circumstances. I'll jot down the details and have the messenger send them over.

"The mirror fragments left behind by Mirror Gardner are closely tied to the special mirror world in Fourth Epoch Trier. My intuition suggests it might be linked to the current state of the Primordial Demoness.

"As for this armor, it's quite special. Wearing it will lead to some fortuitous encounters. Heh heh, ever thought of transforming into a beautiful woman or a handsome lad four to five meters tall?"

After playfully providing basic information about the various items, Magician nodded slightly and added, "Once I'm done, I'll send them back along with the information, and you'll receive an official reward.

"Seven of Wands, it's time for you to leave Trier for a while. The Iron and Blood Cross Order's mission has concluded. Your only task is to inform that mister. I'm confident he'll comprehend and accept it."

Recalling his involvement in two consecutive catastrophes in Trier, Lumian concisely acknowledged and stated, “I share the same sentiment. I intend to track down the remaining April Fool’s members.”

Magician shifted her attention to Franca.

“Your next steps will hinge on the Demoness Sect’s reaction. Remember to report to your Major Arcana card holder when the time comes.”

After Franca acknowledged, Magician glanced at Anthony and Jenna.

“When the aftershocks settle, inquire if they’d like to draw a Minor Arcana card and join the Tarot Club. If they decline, don’t push it. I’ll ensure they keep it a secret.”

Franca asked cheerfully, “Will they become Minor Arcana card holders under you?”

Magician smiled.

“Not necessarily. It’s a matter of fate.”

Addressing Lumian, she advised, “No need to rush your departure. You can lay low for a few days. Head back to Auberge du Coq Doré for now. I sense a fortuitous encounter of fate awaits you there.”

Fortuitous encounter of fate? Lumian was puzzled, but it was evident that Madam Magician had no intention of providing specifics. Perhaps she had glimpsed something but not the full details.

In the next moment, Madam Magician and the objects around her dissolved into starlight and disappeared.

“How surreal…” Franca remarked genuinely.

Turning to Lumian with a pensive expression, she mused, “Do you think Madam Magician might be the Angel of Stars from the Church’s Bible?”

“No way…” Lumian instinctively responded before sinking into contemplation.

…

Rue Anarchie, Auberge du Coq Doré.

As Lumian ascended to the second floor, he noticed a figure crouched outside his door.

It was a chubby, earnest-looking seven- or eight-year-old boy, toting a dark-red school bag.

Ludwig? Baron Brignais's monstrous adopted son? Lumian furrowed his brows and approached.

"What's the matter?"

Ludwig, with his yellow hair and brown eyes, stood up and implored, "Can you help me leave Trier? I don't want to stay in the Church of Knowledge any longer. I don't want to be under Brignais's control. I don't want to deal with homework or tests. I can reward you!"

"Reward?" Lumian arched an eyebrow.

Could this be the fortuitous encounter of fate Madam Magician mentioned?

Ludwig vigorously nodded.

"Yes."

Without hesitation, he unzipped the dark-red hard school bag, revealing a stack of papers.

"I stole this from the Church of Knowledge. No, I brought it here."

Lumian extended his hand, accepting the papers, and quickly scanned the front page.

"Number: 01."

"Name: Deity's Fallen Banner, Salinger's Blood Banner."

"Danger Grade: 0. Extremely Dangerous. It's of the highest importance and of the highest confidentiality. It is not to be inquired, disseminated, described, or spied."

Information on Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts? And it's 0-01! Lumian's forehead and eyelids twitched simultaneously.

He was aware that the Churches had sealed numerous mystical items with significant harmful and negative effects, categorized into four grades. "3" was the lowest, and "0" was the highest. A "1" often indicated a threat to Saints and the potential for a catastrophic event. The implications of "0" were evident.

Lumian's gaze shot up to Ludwig, realizing that the boy's face betrayed nothing out of the ordinary, only pleading.

He lowered his head, swiftly absorbing the rest of the content.

"Security Clearance: Only messengers of God."

"Sealed Method: Place it in an underground mausoleum with a large number of soldier mannequins. Construct a cemetery with more than a million corpses above

it, supplemented by a real city with a population of more than 100,000. The exact execution and ritual arrangements are…"

"Description: This is a charred banner. The flagpole is iron-black metal, and there are a large number of dangerous blood spots on the banner.

"…Beyonders with strength surpassing Sequence 5 are forbidden from approaching. Warning, Beyonders with strength surpassing Sequence 5 are forbidden from approaching!

"…The experimentalist responsible for changing the soldier mannequins must be blindfolded and carry a lantern… If the lantern is extinguished, the experimentalist will vanish. Everyone who knows him will believe that he's long dead… If he's not blindfolded, the one who leaves the mausoleum will be a monster resembling him…

"…The City of Exiles, Morora, on the surface often encounters extreme weather, including but not limited to hurricanes, torrential rain, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions…

"…There were originally no volcanoes around Morora…

"…The inhabitants of Morora are unusually belligerent. There are numerous duels with fatal casualties every day, and protests and riots occur more than six times a year…

"…The residents of Morora have no intention of leaving this city. At any moment…"

"…According to ancient texts, it has witnessed the demise of at least two true gods…"

Dammit, can I even read this? The more Lumian read, the more alarmed he became.

He looked at Ludwig in bewilderment and questioned once more, "Did you really steal it?"

Could information of this gravity be stolen so easily?

Ludwig, looking like a child, wanted to retort, but he nodded sincerely.

"Yes."

Frowning at the boy, Lumian fell into a profound silence.

(End of Volume—Conspirer)

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Chapter 495 - 495 Distribution

495 Distribution

Oh, merciful Father, I implore your mercy for the transgressions I've made.

Lumian, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony fell silent as they stared at the gleaming full-body silver armor before them.

Before delving into the details, they had already sensed the power emanating from the Sealed Artifact. The brief yet potent Hurricane of Light it unleashed was a deadly force. Even Gardner Martin, a Sequence 5 Reaper, was willing to trade other mystical items for its might. However, upon scrutinizing the information provided, their initial enthusiasm waned, and they instinctively distanced themselves from the armor named Pride.

Within the Sealed Artifact information was a stark warning in red ink:

"The curse of betrayal originates from a deity's intense aversion and hatred before Their demise. Even Angels can't fully escape its grasp, only mitigating the negative effects to a certain extent. The sole solution is to shatter the armor and restore it to a pure Beyonder characteristic. However, this means losing its uniqueness. For instance, the ability to use Hurricane of Light again in just two minutes without delay. Moreover, those Beyonders who advance by consuming a potion derived from that Beyonder characteristic will endure reasonable but not-too-severe betrayal for an extended period."

Recalling Gardner Martin's tragic end, Franca, initially skeptical, now felt an unexplained fear. The betrayal curse seemed more formidable than she had imagined.

Lumian observed the hesitancy in Franca, Anthony, and Jenna, realizing none were eager to claim the particular spoils of war.

With a smile, he declared, "I'll go first."

Pointing at Gardner Martin's remains on the coffee table, he stated, "I choose Reaper."

The Beyonder characteristic had fused into a finger, creating an unusually sharp, bone-blade emitting an icy glint. The holder needed to be cautious to avoid accidental injury.

Immediately afterward, Lumian shifted his gaze to the charred bone flute originating from General Philip.

“I’ll trade the Hypnotist Beyonder characteristics and the Decency brooch for this. You guys wouldn’t be able to handle it anyway.”

Per Madam Magician’s intel, while the bone flute held significant power and uniqueness, it carried the risk of bringing misfortune in the form of injuries, death, and other grisly calamities. Only Lumian possessed the resilience to withstand these negative effects and mitigate them without succumbing to excessive misfortune.

In truth, if General Philip’s grudges before his demise hadn’t been so potent, and if the curse of misfortune stemming from the Deceased pathway’s boon hadn’t been so exaggerated, Lumian might have struggled more to endure it. After all, enduring perpetual misfortune wasn’t anyone’s wish. Even if it wasn’t lethal, it would still lead to considerable trouble.

Experiencing excessive bad luck was akin to tempting the fate intertwined with Termiboros, a fate deeply connected to Lumian. The potency of the bone flute wasn’t sufficient to affect an Angel.

As per Madam Magician’s detailed description, Lumian, naming the bone flute the Symphony of Hatred, discovered it possessed three abilities:

“With a simple blow, it emits a sharp, ear-piercing sound. This not only damages the Spirit Body, inducing dizziness, nausea, and convulsions in the target, but it can also directly impact Beyonders with weaker physiques—those equivalent to ordinary adults. They might suffer temporary blindness, paralysis, or internal organ damage.

“It appears that a symphony resonating from the depths of the river of fate inflicts a weakness on the enemy’s mind. Those with unstable minds may experience symptoms akin to madness. Those with psychological issues might have latent problems triggered. There’s even a chance that excessive desires could cause them to explode on the spot. Individuals with illnesses or old injuries will inevitably face severe consequences. Those less fortunate may find themselves extremely unlucky. Of course, the player needs some knowledge about musical instruments to play the bone flute effectively; otherwise, they’ll only create noise, similar to the effect of a simple blow.

“While this bone flute is brittle and can’t be used for blocking, wherever it stabs is equivalent to hitting a vital point. If it strikes a true vital point, the enemy will either be killed in a single blow or face the fate of social death for an extended period.”

Franca observed as Lumian placed the colorless colloid with numerous bubbles and the Decency brooch, crafted into a Scotch Broom, on the coffee table. She nodded imperceptibly.

Observing the lack of objections from Anthony and Jenna, Lumian produced a deep-black cloth bag resembling a coin pouch. He carefully placed the Reaper Beyonder characteristic and the Symphony of Hatred bone flute inside.

Crafted personally by Magician, it was a Beyonder item devoid of characteristics. At first glance, it seemed to hold only up to two hundred coins, but it concealed another dimension within, equivalent to the entire Apartment 601. It could accommodate a vast array of items, including the Pride Armor.

Magician had also placed a specific seal inside the item. While within the bag, Beyonder characteristics didn't require regular relocation, and the negative effects of mystical items would significantly diminish.

The Traveler's Bag needed resealing and reinforcement every six months; otherwise, it would lose its mystical abilities and become ordinary. In such circumstances, if the items inside weren't retrieved promptly, they would be lost to the spirit world and nearly impossible to recover.

Similarly, Franca received a Traveler's Bag as her reward.

After claiming his share, Lumian turned his attention to Anthony Reid, indicating for the Psychiatrist to make his selection.

Anthony smiled wryly. "I contributed the least. I'll take this Hypnotist main ingredient. I feel that my psychological problems have been alleviated. I can contemplate advancing."

In his interactions with Lumian, Franca, and the others, he often heard words and sentences infused with mystic knowledge. Though he refrained from direct inquiries, over time, he vaguely grasped various patterns and the essence of things he wouldn't have considered before. It was as if a new world had unfolded before him.

"No problem," Franca replied, not insisting on Anthony choosing another item. She turned to Jenna and said, "I want the mirror fragment left behind by the fake Martin."

Madam Magician referred to this item as the "Mirror World Fragment." It served as a crucial clue for Franca's subsequent investigation into the state of the Primordial Demoness, and it possessed a unique quality: Using it to reflect a target allowed the user to create a corresponding "Mirror Person." However, they couldn't replicate entities with godhood, and the mirroring effect could only be maintained for a maximum of five minutes.

The fragment produced two types of Mirror People. The first was a shallow mirror image, replicable in ten seconds. The second was a deep conversion that took a minute to complete. The former retained the original body's state, as long as the body hadn't undergone a gender change—similar to those Franca and Lumian had encountered before. However, these Mirror People were relatively weak, equivalent to the original body at a certain past stage and lacked abilities like Mirror Substitution. The latter was a nearly perfect replica, akin to the ones recently encountered, possessing special traits.

Of course, for a Demoness of Pleasure, this wasn't practical. If she could already capture the other party's figure with a mirror, why not directly cast a curse instead of creating a Mirror Person?

Lumian interjected, "You can take another one, Franca. No need to be modest. Your contributions in these battles are second only to mine."

"What do you mean second only to you?" Franca scoffed, pushing the Decency brooch in her direction.

The only remaining spoils of war were the small dark-painted wooden box, each side adorned with a membrane curtain, and the Pride Armor. Jenna swiftly made her choice and selected the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction.

According to Lumian, her lucky gold coin no longer carried any additional luck. Its usefulness was now limited to specific situations. Recognizing this, she didn't believe she could resist the betrayal curse of the Pride Armor. Jenna understood the importance of not being overly prideful and blindly relying on luck, taking Gardner Martin's fate as a sobering lesson.

The usage of Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction involved grasping valuable items with one's hand, inserting them into the dark wooden box through the side "curtain," handing it to the outstretched palm-like object, and stating one's requirements. This process simplified complex matters and eased difficult transactions.

However, one needed to have a clear, achievable target—no vague requests were allowed. For example, directly stating a desire for a specific Beyonder characteristic or mystical item was useless. Users had to find the corresponding Beyonder characteristic or mystical item, fail to reach a deal, and then make their request. This approach involved changing the seller's mind, with a high chance of securing a steep discount.

The "Under-the-table Transaction" had various applications, even allowing two individuals with deep grudges to reconcile by shaking hands inside the box—though the individual shaking hands wasn't actually the other party.

Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction was an active remnant of boon powers, and without Beyonder characteristics, it could only be used nine more times. The downside was that each use increased the likelihood of encountering evil creatures like Demons in future transactions.

As Jenna stowed away the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction, Franca smiled and said,

"I wish to use the Decency brooch to exchange for the black Primordial Demoness figurine, or would you prefer to zero your debt as an exchange?"

Following Madam Judgment's suggestion, Franca intended to use this unique figurine to gauge the Demoness Sect's reaction and potentially exchange it for

their rewards.

“T-this is everyone’s spoils of war,” Jenna responded in confusion.

Jenna glanced at Lumian and Anthony, finding their nods of agreement. She muttered, “Dammit, you’re making me feel embarrassed… I want the Decency brooch. Only by personally paying off a debt does it become meaningful.”

As she spoke, Jenna handed the black Primordial Demoness figurine to Franca and stowed away the Decency brooch, carved into a Scotch Broom.

Finally, the group directed their attention to the silver-white Pride Armor, and a contemplative silence ensued once again.

After a lengthy pause, Franca exclaimed, “Ciel, keep it. Treat it as a communal item that anyone can use. Only the both of us can carry it conveniently now. Besides, you’re about to head to Port Santa in Feynapotter’s Gaia Province. You can’t borrow my Mirror Substitution anymore. This armor will be very useful in critical moments.”

Lumian had already made the decision to investigate the sea prayer ritual in Port Santa, Feynapotter Kingdom’s Gaia Province, and search for traces of the April Fool’s key members—Bard and Ultraman.

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Chapter 496 - 496 Sin

496 Sin

Lumian commented nonchalantly towards Franca's suggestion, "That works too. In the future, if anyone wants to use this armor, I'll 'teleport' it to you. What's this called? It's called Ciel Postal Service. It'll be delivered immediately!"

After joking, he approached the Pride Armor standing beside the coffee table and began stuffing its silver-white glove into the opening of the Traveler's Bag.

With this motion, the towering full-body armor shrank into the small black cloth bag.

As long as one part of an item could enter a Traveler's Bag, it could pass through the opening regardless of its size, as long as it didn't exceed the space within. Typically, flesh and blood infused with vitality couldn't be stored in a Traveler's Bag.

Considering these factors, Lumian's initial thought upon obtaining the Beyonder item and its "explanation manual" was that it could be used to conceal a corpse.

"How magical…" Jenna watched the scene unfold with envy.

Despite attending numerous mysticism gatherings, she had never encountered such an item. The closest thing she knew was the world inside a painting.

Lumian concealed his Traveler's Bag beneath his clothes, a smile playing on his lips. Addressing Anthony and Jenna, he remarked, "After this incident, you ought to know Franca and I are backed by a secret organization. It's not the Iron and Blood Cross Order or the Demoness Sect. So, what do you say? Interested in joining? If not, I'll need you to sign a confidentiality agreement or swear a binding oath of secrecy."

Having heard Lumian and Franca discuss the secret organization and knowing that they genuinely believed in Mr. Fool, Jenna was familiar with the tarot card code name. Having received The Fool's response, her decision was swift.

"I'm in."

Anthony Reid pondered in silence for a moment before inquiring, "Does your organization follow some hidden entity?"

"It's an orthodox god," Lumian responded, addressing Anthony's unspoken concerns. "If you doubt me, I can show you the cathedral."

Observing Lumian's expression, Anthony confirmed the sincerity.

The Psychiatrist let out a bitter laugh and admitted, "Then I don't have an issue. My past experiences and this incident have taught me that I'm still too feeble to prevent such a catastrophe. Even if it stands right beside me, I can only watch as myself and those around me plummet into the abyss."

For Anthony, joining a secret organization seemed like a pragmatic choice to strengthen himself—especially one that followed an orthodox god.

As a believer of the God of Steam and Machinery, Anthony had carefully considered it. He realized that the Church's scriptures lacked any mention of animosity between orthodox gods, unlike the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, which perpetually preached hatred towards the Lord of Storms and the God of Knowledge and Wisdom.

In other words, his faith wouldn't hinder Anthony from joining such a secret organization.

Without waiting for Lumian and Franca's response, Anthony grinned self-deprecatingly and admitted, "I originally planned to head back to the West Midseashire Coast, live in the countryside, but now I'm worried I can't escape the looming catastrophe. Just like those in the market district, who'd willingly dance on the edge of life and death amidst repeated abnormalities? Yet, their wills and desires are futile.

"From what I've seen, catastrophes are becoming more frequent."

Lumian mocked his companion.

"You've turned into a nag after your mental illness got sorted."

He continued, "We'll hash out the details once you confirm your Major Arcana card and get your mission assignment."

Jenna pursed her lips, a dark expression crossing her face.

"I actually kinda like living in the market district…"

It seemed like she needed to leave this place.

A soft chuckle escaped Lumian's lips.

"This is, in fact, protection for the market district. Hunters and Demonesses always bring catastrophe."

Always bring catastrophe, even if they don't do anything? Jenna's eyes narrowed as she sank into deep thought.

“F*ck off! You’re the only one like this!” Franca cursed, a mix of irritation and amusement.

In the past few months, most catastrophes in the market district had orbited around Ciel. What did it have to do with Jenna and me?

Wouldn’t that prove that 007 was right?

After discussing other matters, Lumian and Franca stepped out of 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches into the morning sun. One headed for Psychic’s headquarters on Rue Scheer in Avenue du Boulevard, while the other made her way to Trocadéro.

Lumian opted for a four-wheeled, two-seater rental carriage instead of the usual public carriage.

Outside the carriage window, street vendors hawked Whiskey Sour, meatloaf, freshwater fish, onion bread, spicy sauce, soybean paste, and various other items. Passersby either paused to make a purchase or briskly moved on. Some were clad as clerks, others in an array of differently colored workers’ uniforms.

After the riot of the previous night and the apocalyptic downpour, this place was once again alive with activity.

For Lumian, it was reminiscent of the market district of the past, but now, he was a wanted criminal again—in his identity as Ciel Dubois, a member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order and a leader of the Savoie Mob.

Salle de Bal Brise and the other establishments had undoubtedly been seized by the police headquarters. The Iron and Blood Cross Order’s grip on the market district had almost been eradicated.

Lumian found it regrettable as it meant losing a stable source of income.

However, after taking Ludwig in the previous night and informing Madam Magician about the information, he intentionally returned to Salle de Bal Brise before the chaos settled. He secured 30,000 verl d’or from the safe, bringing his total to 75,000 verl d’or and 1,000 gold.

Lumian’s mind wandered as he observed the passersby and listened to the vendors’ pitches.

After “reporting” the previous night’s matters to Mr. K and obtaining the Aurora Order Oracle’s approval, he planned to leave Trier for the Feynapotter Kingdom.

Before embarking on his journey, he had three priorities:

Firstly, he needed to locate Lugano Toscano, who had lost his job again, and inquire if he was willing to accompany him to the Feynapotter Kingdom’s Port Santa. This Sequence 8 Doctor, often journeying to the Feynapotter Kingdom, was fluent in highlander. Lumian, knowing only Intisian and ancient Feysac, risked

communication challenges without him—having to resort to body language.

Secondly, he awaited Jenna and Anthony's Major Arcana card missions to see if they could collaborate and assist each other.

Thirdly, he planned to use the messenger-related spirit world creature information that came with the Reaper formula from Madam Magician to attempt gaining a messenger. This would make future communication with Franca and others more convenient. Additionally, he had to perform a ritual to acquire one or two more contractual abilities.

…

On Avenue du Boulevard, at 19 Rue Scheer, beneath the luxurious beige house, Lumian met Mr. K once again in the basement.

The Oracle, his face concealed in hooded shadows, occupied a red armchair, his profound gaze fixed on Lumian.

"Last night, I entered Fourth Epoch's Trier," Lumian got straight to the point, hoping to capture Mr. K's attention.

Mr. K's hooded head nodded. "I know. Tell me the whole story."

You know? Lumian was surprised. He recounted capturing Bouvard Pont-Péro during his revenge, and the subsequent events of how he, Franca, and company defeated Mirror Gardner, using the special mirror world to escape Fourth Epoch Trier.

Throughout the entire narrative, he shared only his experiences, avoiding any mention of Jenna and the others' encounters or his speculations. For instance, he omitted details like the fortunate gold coin or Jenna's prayer to Mr. Fool, stating only that he had inexplicably entered the world in the painting.

Similarly, he left out many specifics.

Mr. K listened attentively without interrupting Lumian's account.

After Lumian mentioned the elimination of the Iron and Blood Cross Order's market division and his exposed identity, Mr. K stood up and spoke in a hoarse voice, "No problem. Feel free to seek my assistance at any time."

Without awaiting Lumian's response, the Aurora Order Oracle turned around, knelt, and prostrated himself on the ground.

Mr. K's face pressed tightly against the floor tiles as he muttered to himself, his thoughts incomprehensible.

Lumian waited in silence, refraining from interrupting Mr. K. The shadows around him deepened, as if unseen eyes were fixed on him, sending shivers down his spine.

Yet, he remained unfazed. It seemed normal for individuals from the Aurora Order to suddenly exhibit erratic behavior.

After an indeterminate period, Mr. K coughed violently, and blood spurted from the ground.

He looked up and spoke in a deep, frenzied voice, “Oh, merciful Father, I implore your mercy for my transgressions.”

After repeating this three times, Mr. K’s face pressed against the ground again, emitting sounds of chewing and devouring.

After performing these peculiar actions, he stood up and tapped four times—top, down, left, right—on his chest.

“What happened? Why the repentance?” Lumian asked curiously.

Mr. K rasped, “Our Aurora Order failed to react in time to last night’s catastrophe. Failing to cooperate with you in destroying the ritual was my dereliction of duty.”

“It’s not your responsibility,” Lumian replied, his lips twitching.

The Tarot Club’s actions had primarily propelled the Hostel’s plan forward. It was already commendable for the Aurora Order to swiftly discern what had occurred. There was no need for Mr. K to repent and shoulder the blame for the lapse.

Mr. K shook his head. “No matter the reason, failure to act is a sin.”

Do you have to be so responsible… You’re just a secret organization, not fanatical believers of the Eternal Blazing Sun… Lumian muttered silently.

As if sensing Lumian’s thoughts, Mr. K spread his arms wide and spoke with abnormal fanaticism, “Because our Aurora Order is born to bear all sin.”

I think you’re being too extreme… Lumian struggled to control his expression.

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Chapter 497 - 497 The Fragment's Origins

497 The Fragment's Origins

Mr. K didn't impose any specific requests for Lumian's journey to Feynapotter. He merely reiterated that Lumian could utilize the finger anytime he faced challenges. As long as he wasn't in a unique environment, the Aurora Order Oracle could sense it through the blood connection and offer prompt assistance.

…

In Trocadéro Town, at the entrance of the manor surrounded by grapevines, Franca caught sight of Browns Sauron, her long orange-red hair cascading down like a waterfall.

The Demoness smirked mockingly and said, "I heard your lover is dead?"

"Did you just drink the Provoker potion?" Franca retorted without backing down. "Could it be that members of the Sauron family carry a Provoker trait from birth?"

Without waiting for Browns's response, Franca walked past her, chuckling.

"Yes, Gardner Martin is indeed dead. I killed him myself."

Browns's pupils dilated as she turned her head in surprise to gaze upon Franca's side profile. She saw that the new Demoness had a faint smile on her face, but her eyes were deep and dark—a mix of pleasure and pain, solemn and ruthless.

Franca considered adding, "I was even present to hear your ancestor's scream while being killed," but that would expose her grasp of extensive secret intel and mysticism knowledge that she ought not to have at her level. It would arouse the Demoness Sect's suspicion, so she abandoned the idea. As she advanced, she smiled and said, "Then, I found the item Gardner Martin and his collaborators smuggled into Trier through the catacombs."

"You've found it. What is it?" Browns hadn't expected Franca to complete this mission, a mix of surprise and a tinge of jealousy crossing her features.

Franca didn't hide anything. This was her purpose in coming to Demoness of Black Clarice.

She produced the pitch-black figurine with its hair facing the opposite direction of the orthodox version and waved it in front of Browns.

Browns's expression froze, as if she had seen something terrifying.

"W-why? How is it appearing here…?" The Demoness of Pleasure's voice trailed off, her tone filled with unconcealable shock.

Franca seized the opportunity to ask, "You know what it is?"

Browns snapped out of her daze, her eyes flickering as she said, "My teacher will tell you."

Franca didn't press further and changed the subject with a smile.

"Why does your teacher call herself the Demoness of Black? Wouldn't any ordinary person consider a Demoness a derogatory term?"

"Everyone has different aesthetic standards. Some like to call themselves Saintesses, while others find Demonesses cool. They have a unique and unorthodox flair." Browns appeared more inclined to the latter.

Franca pondered seriously, Men retain their youthful spirit even in death. Is there such excessive self-awareness? Even if they were once men… She realized that if someone called her a Demoness of XX, she would probably feel a strange sense of smugness despite her embarrassment. However, if it were Saintess, she would definitely have goosebumps—her toes cringing so bad that they could dig a hole and bury herself in it.

Clarice's dark gray eyes, tinged with melancholy, swept across Franca's face and the black Primordial Demoness figurine in her hand.

"Yes, I did." Franca took the initiative to recount the previous night's encounter.

She recounted from the moment she failed to tail the Carbonari member until how she and Anthony Reid mysteriously entered the sealed Fourth Epoch Trier under the influence of the Primordial Demoness figurine and the ancient silver mirror despite clearly being in Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

She didn't hide the existence of the ancient silver mirror anymore. She only said that she had accidentally obtained it underground a few months ago. This time, it had some effect but disappeared without a trace after they sank underground.

Everything she said was the truth—every word the truth.

Demoness of Black Clarice interrupted Franca's account and asked thoughtfully, "Did you run into Gardner Martin as soon as you entered?"

Although she hadn't seen it with her own eyes, she seemed to foresee the development.

"Yes, there was also that Carbonari member. He's General Philip, who faked his death. This strange figurine was found on him," Franca replied truthfully. "At that

time, Anthony and I nearly died at Gardner and Philip's hands. Fortunately, Ciel and Jenna inexplicably entered and were hidden nearby."

She briefly recounted the battle and deliberately redirected Jenna's ability towards Vampires.

After listening for a while, the Demoness of Black raised her right hand and gently stroked her face.

"You said that there was an area in the wilderness with chaotic weather in the distance, and there was a giant figure surrounded by hurricanes and thick fog?"

"Yes, we also heard his roar and nearly lost control. Fortunately, we entered the gray fog-shrouded city in time. The commotion outside became very muffled." Franca hadn't expected the Demoness of Black to be so concerned about the giant.

Clarice listened quietly and let out a soft sigh. She felt a mix of sorrow, disappointment, and indescribable relief, making her feel exceptionally pitiful.

Browns looked at her teacher with a puzzled expression, as if she didn't understand why the Demoness of Black had such a reaction.

Franca was puzzled at first, but then her heart skipped a beat.

Browns belongs to the Sauron family. Could it be the same for the Demoness of Black?

Could they be a branch of the Sauron family that had pledged allegiance to the Demoness Sect?

However, the Demoness of Black's hair and eyes don't resemble those of a genuine Sauron family member…

If they are all from the Sauron family, could the Demoness of Black be Browns's relative, or even her father or mother, leading to Browns's current state?

Had the Demoness of Black heard about Vermonda Sauron's current situation and understood the Iron and Blood Cross Order's scheme? Is that why she's so emotional?

As these thoughts raced through Franca's mind, she continued to recount the battle between the four of them and Mirror Gardner. Finally, she took out the pitch-black Mirror World Fragment.

"Your Excellency Demoness of Black, what's this? And what's this figurine?"

Demoness of Black Clarice gazed at the Mirror World Fragment and the black Primordial Demoness figurine and said, "In conventional mysticism, the mirror world isn't a true world. It's an amalgamation of the concept of doors, connected to mirrors and alternate spaces. However, many members of our Demoness Sect are aware that in certain special places, for specific reasons, there are a few mirror

worlds with monsters. You encountered one of them, and this is a fragment of that world…"

She briefly recounted what Franca already knew about the Mirror World Fragment. Finally, she said, "This should have been handed over to me for a reward, but according to your description, many underground Mirror People have already infiltrated Trier. This fragment can help you track them, find them, and eliminate them. You can keep it for a while until the mission is completed.

The origins and effects are the same as what Madam Magician said. From the looks of it, Clarice wasn't lying to me… Sigh, my next mission is in Trier. I can't follow Ciel to Feynapotter to search for Bard and company… At critical moments, I can get him to 'teleport' me there to provide help… Franca sighed inwardly and said, "Yes, Your Excellency Demoness of Black."

The Demoness of Black continued, "This figurine originates from one of the special mirror worlds.

"We believe in the Primordial One in reality. The Mirror People believe in the mirrored Primordial One, but it's actually just a projection of the Primordial One in the mirror."

Just as I suspected… The Primordial Demoness's projection in the mirror underwent an abnormality and gained self-awareness, causing Her condition to worsen? Or is Clarice not telling the entire truth? Under the Demoness of Black's instructions, Franca handed over the special figurine.

Clarice nodded slightly and said, "You completed the Iron and Blood Cross Order mission better than I expected by retrieving this special figurine. What reward do you want?"

Franca didn't hesitate and answered, "The potion formula for Affliction, or perhaps a mystical item that allows me to traverse the spirit world."

The Demoness of Black revealed an inconspicuous smile.

"This time, I'll give you the potion formula for Affliction. Once you complete your next mission, you can choose a mystical item with the Spirit World Traversal ability."

Does that mean I can't exchange my contributions for teleportation-type items this time, but they surpass the value of the Demoness of Affliction formula? I can save a portion and exchange them together when I make other contributions? Franca pondered for a moment and said, "Okay."

Demoness of Black Clarice raised her right hand and swiped at the void.

Franca immediately noticed numerous dark Hermes words outlined on the watery surface at the edge of the circular pavilion.

"Affliction potion formula:

“Sequence: 5;

“Main ingredient: Flower-Faced Bat’s head, Two-Tailed Black Snake’s gallbladder;

“Supplementary ingredients: 30 milliliters of Flower-Faced Bat blood, 50 milliliters of a seriously ill human’s blood, tail tip of the Two-Tailed Black Snake, 10 drops of Enfinitas Eucalyptus essential oil;

“Ritual: Without substitutes, be burned at the stake for fifteen minutes and survive without going mad.”

Hiss… Just reading the description hurts… Franca couldn’t help but shrink back.

After memorizing the potion formula, she left the manor with Browns.

Demoness of Black Clarice watched her silently as she retrieved an item from a hidden pocket in her black court dress.

It was a pitch-black mirror fragment.

It bore a striking resemblance to Franca’s Mirror World Fragment, albeit with an irregular fracture at the edge.

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Chapter 498 - 498 Suspicious Attitude

498 Suspicious Attitude

Lugano Toscano, a burly man with brown hair, brown eyes, and sharp features, donned a budget-friendly black formal suit. He lowered his head as he navigated through the lively crowd, his top hat shading his face.

Upon waking that day, before having breakfast, his companion informed him of being wanted—due to his role as Ciel Dubois's trusted subordinate managing a dance hall.

Despite Lugano's confusion about the Savoie Mob's motives and his certainty of non-involvement, as a wild Beyonder, merely existing rendered him guilty. Reluctant to seek clarification from the Purifiers and Machinery Hivemind, he packed his bags and moved to the safe house without notifying his companions. His plan was to observe for a few more days before deciding on his next move.

During the factories' lunch break, making the market district bustling, Lugano descended and surveyed the area. True to his expectations, he discovered he was indeed wanted, with a bounty of 2,000 verl d'or.

Considering his perceived lack of importance, Lugano hoped to fade from the official Beyonders' attention in due time.

Entering the room, not much larger than an attic, Lugano used a brass key to open the dark-brown wooden door.

Amidst the creaks, a figure caught the Doctor's eye.

Seated at a simple wooden table, Ciel Dubois displayed golden-black hair, a silver earring, a white shirt, a dark jacket, grayish-blue pants, and leather shoes.

How did he find this place? Besides me and the landlord residing in another quartier, no one knows about this safe house! Officially put to use for the first time today! Lugano's pupils dilated, as if he wanted to scrutinize the figure in the dim room.

At some point, the open curtains had been drawn.

Lumian grinned at Lugano and remarked, "Why? Am I not welcomed?"

Lugano instinctively forced a smile, replying, "It's an honor to have you here. I just didn't expect you to know about this doghouse of mine."

He spoke with humility but also subtly hinted at Lumian: I haven't forgotten that I'm your dog!

As Lugano spoke, he entered the room, closing the wooden door behind him.

The space darkened, and a snap echoed.

The candles on the simple wooden table suddenly ignited, casting a yellowish flame.

Lumian lowered his raised right palm and nodded slightly, asking, "Any questions?"

Lugano didn't delve into the crimes of the Savoie Mob's brass that had made him a wanted man. Instead, his concern was elsewhere.

"Monsieur Ciel, how did you know about this safe house of mine?"

Lumian chuckled.

Wh— Lugano's eyes narrowed, sensing the formidable confidence in the other party.

Of course, Lumian wouldn't tell Lugano that he had followed him multiple times, determining the locations of his three safe houses.

As a Hunter, Lumian often roamed the market district during his free time, honing his tracking skills. He was well-acquainted with the area.

While he randomly chose targets for ordinary passersby and residents, Lugano Toscano, a Beyonder seeking to join his ranks, was a crucial subject of investigation to prevent betrayal. Lumian kept a close eye on him to avoid being blindsided by any potential treachery.

Without waiting for Lugano to delve into further inquiries, Lumian got straight to the point.

"I need your help with something."

"It's my honor." Lugano didn't seek details and acted as if he was unquestionably on board.

Isn't this too toady? I'm now a wanted criminal. Without Salle de Bal Brise and other businesses, it's impossible for me to provide any more resources… Lumian stroked his chin with his right hand.

"I need to make a trip to the Feynapotter Kingdom. I wish for you to be my translator."

Lugano promptly responded, "No problem."

Is that so? But I have a problem… Lumian, a Conspirer, grew suspicious of Lugano's unquestioning loyalty, given the lack of inquiry or discussion about returns. He instantly became highly focused.

Could it be that this fellow, like Ludwig, has been "sent" by some faction to interact with me? Lumian raised his eyebrows and smiled.

"I thought you'd refuse. After all, you've already become a Doctor. Even without taking any risks, you can lead a very good life."

Doctors could use superpowers to treat illnesses and injuries, easily sustaining themselves in any country or city.

Lugano said sheepishly, "I'm also wanted. I'm planning to find a place to hide before returning to Trier. Besides, I believe you'll reward me handsomely.

"Although Doctors can treat illnesses, we can't use Beyonder powers openly. That would attract the attention of official Beyonders unless we only dabble in the black market. The best choice is to forge a doctor's license and open a clinic. Add on Beyonder powers while providing regular treatment. However, it will require a large sum of starting funds and sufficient medical knowledge. I already have the latter. As for the former, I've just exchanged all my savings for the main and supplementary ingredients for the Doctor potion."

As he spoke, Lugano's smile ingratiated.

"Once I become a renowned doctor in Trier, I'll earn at least 200,000 verl d'or annually. That way, I won't have to adventure anymore. Even if I don't want to become too famous and attract the attention of official Beyonders, it'll be easy for me to earn 40,000 to 50,000 verl d'or a year."

You're quite familiar with Trier's doctor incomes… Lumian gazed at Lugano's face, his doubts dissipating but still lingering.

He quickly made up his mind and stood up slowly.

"Excellent. Wait three days for me here. I'll come to you after I'm done with other matters. When the time comes, I'll pay you a 5,000 verl d'or advance. When I don't need your translation services, I'll give you another 5,000 verl d'or. If there's a battle midway, you can divide the spoils of war according to rules between adventurers. I'll provide further compensation later, no less than 5,000 verl d'or."

"Alright, Monsieur Ciel." Lugano escorted Lumian out of the room with a smile.

Throughout this process, Lumian observed Doctor's expressions and actions from the corner of his eye, but he didn't detect any abnormalities.

Is this really how he is? There's nothing abnormal about him, or is his acting skills good enough? Lumian looked ahead and descended the stairs steadily.

Jenna didn't linger in Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches. She swiftly packed her belongings, intending to transfer to Franca's safe house in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.

Despite being a leader of the Savoie Mob and Gardner Martin's mistress, Franca strangely hadn't become a wanted criminal. However, the Demoness of Pleasure anticipated that she might face arrest by official Beyonders at her residence soon. Therefore, Franca had prepared to move to Trocadéro Town, having packed her own belongings and Jenna's luggage into a Traveler's Bag for a quick escape.

Carrying a brown suitcase, Jenna entered Rue des Blouses Blanches and noticed peculiar symbols in a side alley, resembling child's graffiti—a sign of the Purifiers' request for a meeting.

Jenna hesitated as she walked forward.

Although she had discussed with Lumian, Franca, and Anthony what to say about the previous night's encounter, meeting official Beyonders still felt risky. The unease lingered.

After nearly ten minutes of contemplation, Jenna let out a soft sigh and turned onto Avenue du Marché, making her way towards the alley behind église Saint-Robert—the designated meeting venue.

Her brother Julien was still in Port LeSeur and would return to Trier in a few months. Jenna aimed to avoid implicating her remaining relative and wanted him to live free from hiding and fear. Her plan was to establish a positive relationship with the Purifiers and entrust them with her brother's safety.

I'm already a Witch who can bring about a catastrophe. I'll shoulder these dark and dangerous matters, Jenna silently muttered to herself, lowering her eyes and quickening her pace.

This time, Valentine and Imre weren't the only ones in the back alley of église Saint-Robert's cathedral. There was also a man with blond hair, golden eyebrows, and a golden beard, dressed in a brown double-breasted coat.

"This is our deacon, Monsieur Angoulême," Imre introduced. "He attaches great importance to last night's catastrophe and wants to know what information you have."

From their perspective, Celia Bello had close ties to Ciel and Franca. One of them was Gardner Martin's subordinate in two aspects, while the other was his mistress. They were expected to be aware of the riots and anomalies in the market district.

Jenna's role as an informant had prompted the Purifiers, on Angoulême's suggestion, to hold off arresting Franca and Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches. For now, their focus was on making Ciel Dubois, confirmed as a "soldier" of the secret organization, a wanted man.

Jenna averted her gaze from Angoulême's golden buttons and suddenly smiled.

"Are you referring to the catastrophe triggered by the unsealing of Fourth Epoch Trier last night?"

Imre and Valentine were initially dazzled by Jenna's smile, but then their eyes widened in shock at the information she revealed.

Angoulême was taken aback and sighed inwardly, as if he had anticipated this.

Jenna tilted her head slightly and added with a smile, "Would you believe me if I said that I witnessed the beginning of the problem and the ritual's process with my own eyes, and I entered Fourth Epoch Trier yet managed to escape?"

Valentine and Imre's eyes widened as they remained silent, unsure of how to respond.

"Is it related to the Hostel you previously reported?" Angoulême asked in a deep voice.

Jenna tersely acknowledged and nodded.

"Where are Franca and Ciel?" Angoulême inquired.

Jenna replied truthfully, "They've left the market district. They probably won't return."

Angoulême breathed a sigh of relief and said,"Tell me more about your experiences."

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Chapter 499 - 499 Minor Arcana Card

499 Minor Arcana Card

Jenna briefed the three Purifiers about their investigation of Hostel, emphasizing the encounter with a cyborg monk from the Deep Valley Cloister underground, who carried a load of paints and brushes. As they subsequently investigated, Ciel and she stumbled upon a tunnel collapse during an earthquake-like upheaval, leading them to fall into the painting's world.

Seems too coincidental?

The coincidence seems so unreal that even best-selling authors wouldn't concoct such a plot twist!

Valentine muttered to himself, "Could it be a miracle from God?"

Jenna nodded, recalling her initial disbelief when she first laid eyes on the painting's market district. "Yes, it was hard to believe at first."

Angoulême, with a subtle gesture of his right hand, signaled Imre and Valentine not to press further, allowing Celia Bello to continue.

Jenna shifted her focus to Séraphine and Gabriel's detailed description of Hostel, delving into her and Ciel's harrowing escape, encounters with pixies, and the relentless attacks from the other "Rooms."

Upon grasping the significance of "Hostel" and "Rooms," Valentine's mind churned with contemplation, making a vital connection.

"Each room harbors a 'resident,' akin to concealing immense power within one's body, allowing a portion of it to leak out… Where have I seen such a state before…"

As images and information flashed through Valentine's mind, he looked up, interrupting Jenna's narrative with a probing question.

"What's Ciel's true identity?"

When the Purifiers plastered the wanted posters across the city, they were onto Ciel Dubois and his fake identity cooked up by the Savoie Mob. The police headquarters had their hands full interrogating the captured Savoie Mob members, digging for any shreds of information about Ciel Dubois's background.

Jenna understood that now that he was wanted, Ciel couldn't conceal his true identity further. After some consideration, she smiled and said,

"Don't you know?

"His real name is Lumian Lee—also a wanted criminal from Cordu in the south."

Lumian Lee… Valentine's eyelids twitched as he realized his suspicions were correct.

Jenna glanced at him and softly "explained," "Ciel joined the Savoie Mob and the Iron and Blood Cross Order to enhance himself and seek revenge on the evil gods' bestowed. He played a crucial role in this matter. Without his investigation, the Hostel ritual wouldn't have been brought forward, and the catastrophe would have been even more severe. Though he claims it's to finish off the bestowed of evil gods, deep down, he doesn't want others to suffer the same fate after he experienced a disaster."

Valentine's expression eased, revealing a mix of regret and relief.

He sighed, acknowledging, "He is indeed a devout follower of God. Unfortunately, fate and those malevolent forces pushed him into the darkness."

Jenna, muttering silently, A devout follower… I'm afraid you have some unnecessary misunderstandings about Ciel.

"I didn't expect the one preventing the catastrophe from escalating last night to be a wanted criminal, a member of an evil organization. Even without standing in the light, one can still be a hero."

She detailed the collapsed grayish-white stone pillar, the distant giant's figure, General Philip's feigned death, the black Primordial Demoness figurine, Mirror Gardner Martin, the terrifying roar, the descending sun, the reddened sky, and the rain of fire. However, she discreetly omitted the specifics of the ensuing battle.

Angoulême and the rest wisely held back from prying too much. Among wild Beyonders, certain intel could fetch a handsome sum, but the details of their abilities and combat techniques were strictly confidential.

"Finally, we obtained the figurine and the fragment left behind by Mirror Gardner, left the seal, and returned to the normal underground," Jenna continued. Though the first half of her sentence wasn't directly related to the second half, it created an impression of how they left Fourth Epoch Trier.

"The complexity of the matter is beyond imagination, and it involves a high-level power," Angoulême sighed softly.

They had no idea what had happened for the sun to rise from the Sacred Heart Cloister last night, nor did they understand why it had fallen into the Fourth Epoch Trier's seal. They felt that it had something to do with an Angel-level battle.

“Where is the figurine and the mirror fragment?” Valentine asked anxiously.

Jenna couldn’t be more honest. “It’s with Franca.”

Angoulême nodded gently.

“Where’s the full-body armor?”

This was linked to the deaths of his two former colleagues.

Of course, Gardner Martin’s death could be seen as a form of successful “revenge.”

“Magic Mirror Divination revealed a terrifying betrayal curse associated with it. Gardner Martin’s fate served as proof. None of us dared to take the risk. Ultimately, we left it with Ciel.” Jenna, even as a Witch, found the curse to be exaggerated and ridiculous.

After a brief silence, Angoulême addressed the issue, “If you encounter Ciel again, tell him he can sell us the armor.”

Jenna nodded in agreement, and the Purifier deacon got serious.

“The intel you provided is very important. What kind of compensation do you want?”

“The potion formula for Pleasure and all the ingredients,” Jenna replied, intending to set a high starting point for negotiation.

This came from years of bargaining experience.

Angoulême glanced at the Witch and said, “Are you planning to leave the market district too?”

“That’s right.” Jenna smiled sadly and self-deprecatingly. “Witches bring catastrophe. I don’t want to impact the people here. No wonder the Witches in stories always live in the dark forest, away from people. However, I’ll return occasionally and remain your informant. You can continue to contact me through the agreed method.”

Her slightly sad smile prompted an instinctive urge in Imre to look away, wary of falling for her.

“Once we verify the authenticity of your intel, we’ll help you apply for the formula and ingredients for Pleasure. I can’t guarantee its success. Items at this level require approval from the higher-ups,” Angoulême promised without entering into further negotiation.

After bidding farewell to the Purifiers, Jenna picked up her suitcase and took a carriage to Franca’s safe house in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.

Once settled, she reflected for a moment and decided to express her gratitude at The Fool's cathedral in Lavigny Docks. She felt compelled to thank this great entity for answering her prayers and enabling Ciel to enter the painting world to provide assistance.

In the pristine cathedral with clear windows, Jenna sat at the edge of the last row of pews. She closed her eyes, clasped her hands, brought them to her chest, and bowed her head in prayer.

Amidst the tranquility of the religious space, it felt as if she had entered a deep slumber, her mind empty, and her words mere offerings of praise.

Vaguely, she sensed someone settling beside her.

Ignoring the newcomer, she continued with her prayer.

After a few minutes, she opened her eyes and noticed a petite lady praying beside her.

The lady had shoulder-length yellow hair and wore light pants, a masculine-looking shirt, and a small brown coat.

Although her eyes remained closed, the delicate contours of her brows, mouth, and nose were discernible from her side profile. Despite her lack of height, she exuded a calm and dignified aura.

Sensing Jenna's gaze, the woman opened her eyes and greeted her with a smile.

"Jenna?"

"Yes… Whom am I speaking to?" Jenna felt puzzled and vigilant, but she sensed no danger in Mr. Fool's cathedral.

The young lady introduced herself, "I'm the Major Arcana card holder of the Two of Cups, whom you might know as Franca, Judgment.

"I came to The Fool's cathedral to pray today, not expecting to meet you. Perhaps this is fate. How about it? Do you want to draw a Minor Arcana card?"

Feeling the friendliness in her tone, Jenna nodded and said, "I'd be delighted, Madam Judgment."

If it were any other Major Arcana card holder, Jenna might have been instinctively worried, but Franca and Lumian had already mentioned Judgment and Magician to her. She had a natural favorable impression and trust in them.

Judgment retrieved a stack of tarot cards from a small black bag hanging from her waist. She casually cut them a few times and handed them over with a smile.

"Draw one."

Jenna felt inexplicably nervous. After contemplating for a moment, she reached out her right hand and drew a Minor Arcana card.

The card depicted seven cups floating in the clouds, with skulls and people looking at them below.

“Seven of Cups,” Madam Judgment chuckled. “This represents confusion, puzzlement, dreams, illusions, and choices. But what’s important is not that. Our Tarot Club’s two Demonesses drew a Cup card.”

She produced another tarot card, this one portraying an angel sounding a trumpet to guide the departed.

Major Arcana card, Judgment!

“Keep this card. When faced with unforeseen danger, take it out and recite ‘Rain Judgment’ in Hermes. As long as I’m in Trier, I can provide assistance. Of course, you have to be in Trier too when requesting. Except in places like Fourth Epoch Trier—I won’t be able to hear you,” Madam Judgment calmly explained.

“Thank you, Madam Judgment,” Jenna expressed her gratitude sincerely, accepting the Major Arcana card.

Judgment nodded and continued, “Now, cooperate with the Two of Cups to carry out the Demoness Sect’s mission, but with a different direction. Avoid the Demoness Sect and investigate the special mirror worlds. The Demoness of Catastrophe, Krismona, who perished in the Fourth Epoch, is a starting point. She’s a child of the Primordial Demoness, a natural-born woman—a pure female Demoness, just like you.”

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Chapter 500 - 500 “Nonexistent” City

500 “Nonexistent” City

The child of the Primordial Demoness must be born as a woman? Jenna pondered the Sequence name “Witch” and began to grasp its significance.

“Alright,” Jenna agreed.

Upon joining the Tarot Club, her initial mission didn’t require her to part ways with her companions or expose herself to unnecessary risks, bringing a sense of comfort.

Madam Judgment responded with a smile, saying, “Allow me to update you on the Tarot Club’s current situation…”

…

After Anthony Reid left Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, the exhaustion of a sleepless night hit him hard.

As a Psychiatrist, his physical condition hadn’t improved much. Staying awake until dawn and enduring severe injuries took a toll. Surviving with the help of the blood-sucking obsidian arrow had left him weakened, having lost a significant amount of blood. Subsequent intense battles and relentless running had drained his stamina, leaving him naturally fatigued and yearning for a bed.

At times like these, he couldn’t help but envy the Hunters. Lumian, just one Sequence higher, hadn’t slept either. Despite being the main force in both battles, he showed no signs of weariness, appearing energetic enough to take on Gardner Martin once more.

Pressing on, Anthony Reid turned onto Rue Anarchie, entering a brownish-gray house and reaching a corner on the third floor.

This was his safe house, an apartment vacant for a long time.

He believed it unsafe to rent from a landlord or broker for a safe house. Any interaction risked betrayal and tracking. Leveraging his identity as an information broker, he identified unused or abandoned apartments in the market district. If things went awry, he could choose a random one to hide without making contact.

Dusty bed and moldy blanket didn’t bother Anthony. He collapsed and quickly succumbed to sleep.

In the hazy dream, clarity and rationality returned suddenly.

Ahead, Avenue du Marché unfolded, a café bustling with patrons and thriving.

Following his peculiar intuition, Anthony Reid passed a golden retriever at the café's entrance and arrived at Booth D by the window.

A lady in a light-green and white dress sat there. Anthony sensed he should see her face clearly, one capable of leaving a stunning impression, but a clear mental image eluded him.

It was as if all the information had been gathered, but his brain or Body of Heart and Mind struggled to process it.

"Good morning. I'm Justice," the lady introduced herself in a gentle voice, carrying a hint of briskness.

Justice… Anthony had already learned from Lumian and Franca that the secret organization they belonged to was the Tarot Club. Members used tarot cards as code names, with Major Arcana card holders representing key demigod members, and Minor Arcana card holders as peripheral members under the different Major Arcana cards.

Justice was undoubtedly a Major Arcana card.

Justice smiled.

"Of course, some entities don't think so."

The Major Arcana card opposite him was friendly, not imposing at all. She even initiated a joke, easing Anthony's tense heart.

He exhaled quietly and said, "I can draw a card now."

As he finished speaking, a stack of tarot cards appeared in front of him.

Anthony habitually selected one from the middle and placed it on the table.

The Minor Arcana card revealed: a man carrying a sword sitting beneath three hanging swords.

Four of Swords!

"You've already unburdened your heart. The remaining rest and preparation are for propelling yourself further into the future. As a Psychiatrist, this card signals you to be vigilant about your mind at all times. We can shoulder new burdens at any moment, and it's crucial to know how to accept, accommodate, and resolve them," Madam Justice interpreted the Minor Arcana card.

A stack of tarot cards appeared in front of her, noticeably less than before.

With casual ease, she drew a card and placed it at the center of the table.

The card portrayed an impartial goddess seated on a stone chair, wielding a sword and scales—the Justice card from the Major Arcana!

Pushing the Justice card toward Anthony, she smiled and said, “You have two missions now. First, collaborate with the Two of Cups to eliminate Mirror People and investigate the Demoness Sect’s predicament. Second, make contact with a covert organization known as the Psychology Alchemists…”

Psychology Alchemists… Anthony mulled over the name.

After laying out the missions, Justice inquired, “Did they brief you on the specifics of the great existence we’re following and the Tarot Club?”

“All I know is that you follow an orthodox god named The Fool and use tarot cards as code names, following His name,” Anthony honestly replied.

Before formally joining the Tarot Club, Lumian and Franca had kept details scarce.

Justice chuckled.

“Then allow me to introduce you to our beacon and savior, the great Mr. Fool…”

Her tone held a touch of joy.

…

After leaving Lugano Toscano’s secure hideout, Lumian took a carriage to Quartier du Jardin Botanique. He navigated the street named Rue des Pavés in the market district and entered the safe house he had leased earlier.

Ludwig sat on the sofa, engrossed in a novel and indulging in dessert. Lumian glanced at him, sneering, “Escaping the Church of Knowledge doesn’t mean you should stoop to reading novels only!”

Ludwig diverted the conversation. “Someone of ill temper sent you a letter. It’s in the bedroom.”

“The one in the golden dress, like a doll,” Ludwig replied, not bothering to look up. Midway, he paused to savor a bite of carrot cake, a specialty from the Loen Kingdom.

Madam Magician’s messenger… Lumian asked in puzzlement, “Why did she lose her temper at you?”

“I saw her and had a little spat with her,” Ludwig replied nonchalantly.

Just an argument? She didn't string you up for a beating? Lumian muttered silently as he entered the bedroom and picked up the folded letter from the desk.

This letter differed from the one that had previously rewarded him. It primarily addressed Lumian's inquiries after acquiring the 0-01 information.

"This seems to be a hint from the Church of Knowledge.

"If you can attain a high position, they are willing to offer some assistance. They might even tacitly permit you to take possession of the Sealed Artifact.

"However, there are two prerequisites. Firstly, you must achieve the status of a Sequence 4 Saint at the very least, possessing godhood and the qualifications to step onto the chessboard. Secondly, you must have a method to transport that Sealed Artifact without causing harm to the surrounding humans and the environment.

"If you fail to meet these two conditions, the Church of Knowledge won't extend clear support.

"There's also a contradiction for becoming a demigod and how those more formidable than Sequence 5 are unable to approach 0-01. Perhaps there's a hidden message here, suggesting that after proving your ability to advance to Sequence 4, but before consuming the potion through a ritual, entering the City of Exiles, Morora, and approaching 0-01 is the next step. Leave a mark or achieve something to lay the groundwork for controlling it when you advance to a higher Sequence.

"As for their specific expectations, I cannot discern them at the moment.

"In simple terms, if you demonstrate and prove your potential, the Church of Knowledge is willing to support your bid for the Red Priest position, competing against Red Angel Medici. Does that surprise you? Are you excited?"

Surprise? More like shock! Lumian had never truly entertained the idea of becoming a true god.

Despite not being a devout believer, he had grown up in a society influenced by such beliefs. His exposure to the mystical world was relatively recent, making the notion of "I too can become a god; I also want to become a god" unlikely.

As for the terror and might of Red Angel Medici, Lumian had witnessed it in Fourth Epoch Trier.

The prospect of becoming enemies with such a formidable entity and vying for the Red Priest's deity position instinctively struck him as absurd and meaningless.

What's the fundamental difference between this and Aurore's jest during combat class, claiming you've mastered basic combat techniques and can now slay a god?

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian suddenly muttered to himself, If I become a true god, can I resurrect Aurore…

After a moment of silence, he smiled self-deprecatingly and said, “Even deities can perish, and may not be resurrected.”

Madam Magician mentioned that the betrayal curse of the Pride Armor stems from the aversion and hatred of a deity before Their demise… However, according to the information she provided, the Pride Armor first appeared at the end of the all-out war in the Northern Continent. Did a true god perish back then?

The abilities of the Pride Armor clearly belong to the Warrior pathway… The one who perished was the God of War? But in the Feysac Empire, the Church of the God of Combat is still fine. Uh, that’s what the newspapers, magazines, and merchants said…

Lumian pondered for a moment but couldn’t come to a conclusion. He shifted his gaze back to the letter.

“I never intended for you to pursue the Red Priest’s deity position, actually. I believed that with an Angel sealed within you and a changed fate, there was a chance for you to become a High-Sequence Beyonder. Now, follow your heart’s desires. Our Tarot Club is here to support you.

“However, there’s something to be cautious about:

“I went to Lenburg and consulted a few local scholars known for their knowledge, but none of them have heard of the City of Exiles, Morora.

“In the eyes of ordinary people and even the lower- and middle-class clergymen of the Church of Knowledge, this city is nonexistent and unrecorded.”

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